


# The Routledge Companion to World Literature

Edited by Theo D'haen, David Damrosch and Djelal Kadir

# THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO WORLD LITERATURE

In the age of globalization, the category of "World Literature" is increasingly important to academic teaching and research. *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* offers a comprehensive pathway into this burgeoning and popular field.

Separated into four key sections, the volume covers:

- the history of World Literature through significant writers and theorists from Goethe through to Said, Casanova and Moretti
- the disciplinary relationship of World Literature to areas such as philology, translation, globalization and diaspora studies
- theoretical issues in World Literature including gender, poetics and ethics
- a global perspective on the politics of World Literature.

The forty-eight outstanding contributors to this companion offer an ideal introduction for those approaching the field for the first time, or looking to further their knowledge of this extensive field.

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# PREFACE

## *Weltliteratur, littérature universelle, vishwa sahitya* …

Though the term "world literature" has been around for some two centuries now, and though reflection on the meaning and reach of the term has never really stopped within the field of comparative literature, it is only with the recent turn toward globalization, cosmopolitanism, and transnationalism that it has become one of the focal points for reflection within all of literary studies. Scholars around the world are now exploring world literature as a phenomenon and are debating its uses and limitations as a subject of study. These ongoing debates have major implications for the study of individual national literatures as well as for broader regional configurations, and they affect our understanding of earlier periods as well as the literature of our globalizing present. Translation studies, literary theory, postcolonial and area studies, and comparative literature as a whole are all subject to rethinking and reframing in light of these debates. The fifty essays in this volume are intended as a collective guide to this emergent field of study – unfolding its history, exploring its disciplinary formations and its theoretical implications, and mapping the shifting geographies of world literature today.

Ambiguities and uncertainties have attended the conception of world literature from its early formation in the heyday of European nationalism to its current global reformulation. The first person to give *Weltliteratur* general currency, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, never really defined the term, which he used in quite varied ways in his voluminous writings. His viewpoint oscillated between an essentially European focus and a much more global perspective, and he was ambivalent as well about the social and aesthetic implications of the literary commerce of his day. Goethe championed *Weltliteratur* as entailing the intimate commerce or exchange of ideas between like-minded writers around Europe, and yet on the other hand, he saw that the worldly circulation of literature was bound up with a transformation that he viewed far less favorably, the ever-increasing commercialization of popular literature and the spread of mass culture. The opposition between these two concepts of "world literature," the one referring to the circulation of elite cultural goods among an international coterie of connoisseurs, the other embracing all literary works and all readers everywhere, keeps running through the subject's further history.

After Goethe, the interpretations put upon *Weltliteratur* have mostly tended to vacillate between the aesthetic and the archival, between a selective canon of masterpieces and a comprehensive coverage of "all" literature – *littérature universelle*, as it

came to be known in France, "universal" or "general" literature in England and North America. These versions of *Weltliteratur* evolved in a somewhat uneasy coexistence with the new term (and then discipline) of "Comparative Literature" and its Continental cousins such as "Littérature comparée," "Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft," or "Letteratura comparata." World literature almost inevitably became the province of this new discipline. This, however, was usually not Goethe's transnational intellectual and artistic commerce but rather a more circumscribed comparison of major works from proudly independent national traditions. Moreover, this canon was largely restricted to literatures in European languages, and even primarily in a few major European languages, foremost among them French, English and German, often connected to Latin and to classical (but not modern!) Greek. Italian, Spanish, and Russian typically came in as distant runners-up, and then the occasional other, smaller, European literature, often depending upon the provenance or linguistic skill of a particular practitioner.

Closer to Goethe's original ideas on *Weltliteratur*, yet inflected by their particular situations, were the views of Rabindranath Tagore and Maksim Gorky early in the twentieth century. Invited in 1907 by the Indian National Council of Education to give a lecture on the rising field of Comparative Literature, Rabindranath Tagore chose instead to speak on *vishwa sahitya* – Bengali for "World Literature." Implicitly rejecting both great-power comparatism and the British promotion of an English literary curriculum in India, Tagore instead emphasized the universal values that could be elucidated in all the world's literatures, whether major or minor, imperial or colonial. A more directly revolutionary conception of world literature underlies an essay that Maksim Gorky wrote a dozen years later, on the occasion of the establishment in 1919 of the Soviet publishing house Vsemirnaia Literatura ("World Literature"), dedicated to publishing more than fifteen hundred volumes of translations dating from the French to the Russian Revolutions. The Moscow series included many European works – though with an emphasis on Scandinavia and Eastern Europe as well as the Western European nations – but also featured works from India, China, Japan, the Middle East, and the Americas.

What mattered most for Gorky was to recuperate the idea of world literature for the ideology of the newly created Soviet state in the wake of the European cataclysm of the First World War. In Gorky's presentation, world literature provides a privileged means of access to other people's thoughts and experiences, fostering solidarity and harmony in the dual struggle for physical and social wellbeing. Gorky's name would later be given to an institute dedicated to the study and propagation of world literature along Soviet lines. It is under the auspices of this Institute that the multivolume *Istoriia vsemirnoĭ literatury v deviati tomakh* (History of World Literature in Nine Volumes) started appearing as of 1983 in Moscow. The project never reached its full nine volumes, as the Soviet Union imploded in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the work was discontinued after the eighth volume appeared in 1994: the history of world literature was overtaken by world events.

The shape of world literature has been transformed since then, as a result of the cultural and political realignments of the past two decades. From China and Vietnam to Romania and Turkey, scholars, teachers, and writers themselves are looking anew

at their literary relations to the wider world, while in Western Europe and the United States, new waves of immigration, and the aftershocks of the attacks on September 11, 2001, have lent a special cogency and even urgency to the study and understanding of as full as possible a range of the world's cultures. The gathering momentum of globalization has furthered both the contacts and the conflicts among peoples across the globe, and courses in world literature are rapidly expanding their purview beyond their traditionally Western European focus. Often formerly relegated to lower-level undergraduate curricula, world literature surveys and debates on world literature are now becoming an integral part of comparative literature curricula at the graduate level as well.

Considerable perplexities attend the rapid expansion of the purview of world literature, which encounters resistance today from two quite different perspectives: that a truly global study of world literature is impossible, and that it is all too easy. Both critiques are well grounded, and any scholar or teacher of world literature must wrestle with problems of method, approach, and perspective. How can we gain an adequate grounding in more than one or two cultures? How do we make intelligent choices of what to read or teach? Conversely, once we have made our selection, how can we avoid skimming the surface of complex works that we may need to read mostly in translation? How do we avoid a simple projection of our home-culture values onto the wider world, and how do we negotiate the uneven cultural, political, and economic landscape in which our texts circulate and we ourselves take part? If even Goethe's *Weltliteratur* has never managed to become a stable term, how can we make sense of its exfoliating avatars as *vishwa sahitya* in Bengal, *mirnaia literatura* in Russia, *dünya edebiyatı* in Turkey, and *shijie de wenxue* in China?

*The Routledge Companion to World Literature* seeks to address these challenges, offering expert guidance to scholars and students with concise and yet comprehensive essays on key concepts and issues in the study of world literature. Written by leading authorities on the respective topics, the fifty essays in the *Companion* are arranged into four sections, each of which addresses a major dimension of the field. A primary dimension is historical: we should not allow the currency of today's discussions to eclipse the long and rich history of debates on world literature, which have much to teach us today. Part I thus concentrates on the emergence and history of the use of the term "world literature," with each essay focusing on the ideas and work of a significant scholar, writer, or critic. Turning to the present, Part II focuses on the relationship of world literature to a broad group of scholarly disciplines; our contributors show how much the study of world literature benefits by sustained engagement with the range of disciplines dealing with national and international literary and cultural relations, and we hope to show as well that these disciplines have much to gain in turn by engagement with the perspectives of world literature. Part III situates world literature with regard to important theoretical issues concerning literary forms and themes and the production, circulation, and teaching of world literature. Finally, Part IV emphasizes the variety found when we look at differing regional configurations. On this perspective, world literature is not a vast, monolithic entity but takes different forms in different times and places, both as a canon or canons of texts and also as a mode of reading and reception, always in dialogue with the values and concerns of the receiving culture.

It takes a world to write an introduction to world literature. The editors wish to thank all of the contributors to the *Companion* for freely sharing their expertise, for keeping to tight deadlines, and for the unfailing grace with which they responded to queries, corrections, and suggestions for revision. We also wish to thank colleagues too numerous to mention by name in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa, who provided invaluable advice, feedback, and, last but not least, inspiration and encouragement. We are grateful as well to our editor at Routledge, Polly Dodson, for her warm support for this project, and to her assistant Emma Nugent for her stalwart aid throughout its development. We are very fortunate to have had the pleasure of working with so lively and generous a community of colleagues in creating this worldly collection.

Theo D'haen
David Damrosch
Djelal Kadir

Part I

# THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION

# 1
# JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE
## Origins and relevance of *Weltliteratur*

*John Pizer*

Contrary to popular perception, Germany's most celebrated writer, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, was not the first intellectual to employ the term "world literature" (*Weltliteratur*) (Berczik 1967: 7 n. 9; Weitz 1987). Nevertheless, it is Goethe to whom credit must be given for creating the paradigm that became a significant, widely debated element in critical and pedagogical literary discourse, particularly in the last two decades, when scholars seeking to gain a purchase on the emergence of imaginative literature as shaped by the forces of globalization and transnationalism have frequently drawn on Goethe and his term.

What did *Weltliteratur* signify for Goethe? The major difficulty in answering this question stems from the circumstance that he never attempted to define it in any cohesive manner. Instead, the term makes a number of random appearances in letters written toward the end of his life, diary entries, aphorisms, references in his journal *Über Kunst und Altertum*, and in a number of conversations with his secretary, Johann Peter Eckermann, who edited and published these colloquies under the title *Gespräche mit Goethe* (*Conversations with Goethe*) in 1836, almost ten years after Goethe first used the expression in 1827 and four years after his death. This chronological gap between utterance, publication, and concomitant public discourse is significant, because in 1827 the suppression of nationalist sentiments in the German states resulting from the decrees of the 1815 Congress of Vienna was still quite effective, while by 1836 such sentiments were flaming anew and efforts to stamp them out were becoming increasingly futile. The political atmosphere created by repressive *ancien régime* policies in 1820s Germany and in Europe as a whole enabled the cosmopolitan milieu in which a transnational concept such as world literature could emerge. It is important to keep this circumstance in mind in order to understand both the most significant principles Goethe intended to convey with his term, and its seminal importance for present-day debates on literary globalization, the two primary aims of what follows in the present essay. There are a number of scholars who believe Goethean *Weltliteratur* emerged in an age of virulent nationalism, and that it is conceptually tinged by such nationalist ideology (for example, Wegner 2003: 281). This perspective conflates

Goethe's articulation of world literature in the late 1820s and early 1830s with its initial reception in the late 1830s, which, given the upsurge in nationalism at that time, was frequently negative.

## The broad contours of Goethe's world literature paradigm

Though Goethe's failure to cogently articulate his concept seems to imbue it with a scattered, uncohesive, even superficial quality, one can discern certain core postulates in his variegated employment of the term when his random remarks on the subject are considered as a whole. The German-Swiss literary scholar Fritz Strich greatly facilitated our ability to obtain such a totalistic perspective by bringing the most essential of Goethe's widely dispersed utterances on world literature together in the appendix to his *Goethe und die Weltliteratur* (*Goethe and World Literature*, 1946), still the most important monograph on the subject, though it is sometimes necessary to examine these passages in their fuller original context in order to understand them adequately. Strich presents these excerpts in chronological order. While the first of these is a diary entry from January 1827 in which the term is employed without adumbration, the second passage is one of the most seminal enunciations for critics who seek to understand Goethe's paradigm. It was inspired by a review of a French adaptation of Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso* (1790) which appeared in the French journal *Le Globe*. Goethe claims here that the review and others in French journals treating his work inspire him to consider the progress of humanity. Goethe claims he is not citing such communications ("Mitteilungen") to draw attention to his work, but to make sure his friends are aware that a world literature is in the process of formation, in which Germans will play an honorable role; the various nations observe the Germans, praising or blaming, understanding or misunderstanding them. On the whole, Goethe regards this attention as valuable to the Germans (qtd. in Strich 1946: 397).

This initial articulation of Goethe's paradigm appeared in an 1827 issue of *Über Kunst und Altertum*. While this journal's initial focus in 1816 consisted in an engagement with the ancient classical art treasures in the area circumscribed by the Main and Rhine rivers, and was thus initially titled *Über Kunst und Alterthum in den Rhein- und Mayngegenden*, it developed under Goethe's guidance into a periodical with a much more broadly international focus (Bohnenkamp 2000: 188–89). Goethe's initial proclamation that a world literature was in the process of forming was inspired by his sense that the reception of literary works was moving beyond linguistically and politically drawn cultural borders through increased translation activities and enhanced communication/transportation developments mitigating the international restrictions imposed by such borders. It would appear that Goethe's focus on the German role in this process lends his remarks a nationalist tinge, but he is merely highlighting Germany's central role with respect to European geography and its undisputed centrality with respect to the mediation of culture through translation. In an essay on the significance of *Über Kunst und Altertum* for the development of Goethe's world literature concept, Anne Bohnenkamp notes that this paradigm signified, in Goethe's view a "process of reception raised to a higher

power" because, as the title of Bohnenkamp's essay indicates, Goethe's engagement with the reviews of adaptations of his work constituted the "reception of a reception" (Bohnenkamp 2000: 187). Goethe's perception of world literature as a process of enhanced reception across nations and languages extends beyond the realm of contemporary criticism to literary history and aesthetics. In a conversation with Eckermann dated 15 July 1827, Goethe proclaimed that the increased interchange ("Verkehr") among the French, English, and Germans triggers a process of cross-border corrections among these nations; he argues that Thomas Carlyle was more judicious in his judgment of Friedrich Schiller than a German might be, whereas the Germans are in a better position to appreciate the worth of Byron and Shakespeare than are the English themselves (qtd. in Strich 1946: 397–98). In a passage from the *Gespräche* not provided by Strich, Eckermann prefaces these remarks by citing Goethe's view that the Germans were weak in the domain of aesthetics and might have to wait a long time before producing a man like Carlyle (Goethe 1948–54: vol. 24: 262). Goethe quite clearly believed that the dawning age of world literature would broadly improve critical acumen in the matter of aesthetic judgments touching on literary art both past and present.

Goethe's most famous pronouncement on world literature also came in the course of a conversation with Eckermann, this one dated 31 January 1827. Here he announced that national literature now signified very little, that the epoch of world literature is dawning and all individuals must work to speed up ("beschleunigen") the arrival of this period (qtd. in Strich 1946: 397). The brief passage provided by Strich occurs in the course of a rather long entry in the *Gespräche* which begins with Goethe's observation that his reading of a Chinese novel, contrary to Eckermann's supposition that this work must have seemed odd and strange ("fremdartig") to him, led him to the insight that the characters think, feel, and act much like we do. One feels oneself among equals, only that everything proceeds more ethically and clearly among them (Goethe 1948–54: vol. 24: 227). While the circumstance that a Chinese novel inspired one of his most widely cited enunciations concerning world literature does not by itself absolve Goethe of the charge that his paradigm is informed by a Eurocentric perspective, his remark does indicate that a truly global perspective of the literary scene is sometimes to be found in his articulations of the concept. When he suggests that it is European countries that are involved in a world literature dialogue capable of improving the creative output of each individual national literature and broadening each nation's critical acumen, this is primarily due to the fact that the international commerce between the German states and foreign lands was largely confined to Europe by the rather limited contact between that continent and other continents in the early nineteenth century. Increased cross-border marketing of literature, enhanced translation activity, collaboration and interchange between men of letters in diverse lands: given the infrastructural and geopolitical realities of the age, world literature on a broad scale was largely restricted to Europe. Goethe's fascination with Asian literature, evident less in his praise of the Chinese novel than in his poetry cycle *West-östliche Divan* (*West-Eastern Divan*, 1819), a sort of imagined dialogue with the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz across time and space, attests to his trans-European cosmopolitanism, but he was conscious that this truly global literary awareness was relatively rare in the 1820s.

Given Goethe's view that world literature is most valuable as an emerging paradigm in its ability to enhance the equilibrium and insights of the various national literatures, what are we to make of the rather striking proclamation in this famous passage that the term "national literature" ("Nationalliteratur") is no longer significant? Certainly, the political context in which Goethe found himself in 1820s Restoration Germany influenced this announcement. While the German Confederation brought a certain economic cohesion to its member states that was lacking during the days of the Holy Roman Empire (which had been dissolved by Napoleon in 1806), pan-German censorship laws and the suppression of the most nationalistic of entities within the German-speaking realm, the university student associations known as *Bursenschaften*, held sentiments for a unified political state in check. In 1832, the year of Goethe's death, the writer Fanny Lewald observed that residents of the west and south in the Confederation tended to regard villages at a distance of three miles away as being foreign, and thus existing abroad (Sagarra 1980: 46). With the somewhat xenophobic atmosphere initially generated by resistance to Napoleon effectively quashed, a jingoism Goethe detested, he could proclaim in 1827 that "national literature" lacked significance because there was, even within the domain of permissible public discourse, no German nation. Germany only existed in the 1820s as what historians term a cultural nation (*Kulturnation*), but even the cultural and linguistic commonalities infusing contemporary German literature could not constitute for Goethe a national literature. One reason Goethe finds no further significance in national literature is what he perceived as its virtual nonexistence within the Confederation. This circumstance constitutes another stimulus to Goethe's emphasis on the "honorable" and central role Germans play in the formation of German literature (qtd. in Strich 1946: 397), but also underscores the dangers faced by the Germans with the introduction of "Weltliteratur": in this domain, he warns that "the German has the most to lose" (qtd. in Strich 1946: 399). Unencumbered by a fixed national-political identity, German authors could observe the external world with a certain clarity not available to writers who reside in lands with cultural and political centers. On the other hand, the lack of such a center means that Germans cannot develop into classical national authors, and, literally uncentered, might lose themselves in the "world" of world literature. Goethe had already suggested as much in an earlier essay on "literary sansculottism" (1795).

For Goethe, then, world literature is a process whereby men of letters in diverse nations learn from each other through relays of literary reception enhanced through translation activity, the "increasing rapidity of literary traffic" (qtd. in Strich 1946: 400), greater personal contract and interchange among "Literatoren," which is to say individuals involved in the creation, critical analysis, and transmission of literature (qtd. in Strich 1946: 399), and the spread of European journals such as *Le Globe* and *Über Kunst und Altertum* with a broadly cosmopolitan, rather than narrowly national, attention to aesthetic matters. Such world literature does not bring an end to discrete national literatures, but rather leads to greater balance, insight, and enhanced stylistic and thematic range in both literary criticism and the production of imaginative literature itself.

While the areas of commerce and reception in the broadest sense of these terms were most central in Goethe's consistently brief articulations of his concept, the

issue of canonicity also played a role in his definition of the paradigm. Goethe did not have a capacious attitude with respect to the kind of works he believed should belong to world literary discourse. In his observations concerning the development of world literature within the context of his famous proclamation that the world at large was nothing but an "expanded fatherland," he makes the prescient prophecy that popular works – "what appeals to the masses" – will soon enjoy a limitless expansion. He finds it fortunate, however, that given the increased interchange possible for those devoted to higher things ("dem Höheren"), a cross-border dialogue he consistently attributed not only to technological and transportation improvements but also to the peace enjoyed by Europe in the wake of Napoleon's defeat, the serious-minded can form their own modest school until the flood of popular (trivial) literature has passed (Goethe 1948–54: vol. 14: 914–15). Goethe not only believed that what he would term mass literature should not be included in the world literary dialogue, but had a conflicted attitude toward popular poetry in the traditional sense, which is to say the orally transmitted songs and tales of the lower classes. As David Damrosch has noted, for example, Goethe had a brief infatuation with Serbian poetry, but later dismissed it, along with Germanic poetry from the Middle Ages, "as emblems of barbaric crudity" (Damrosch 2003: 13). This dismissive attitude can partly be attributed to his deep contempt, in the last stage of his life, for the proclivities of the German Romantics, and nothing was dearer to them than popular poetry and medieval Germanic literature. By contrast, particularly during his "Weimar Classical" phase, Goethe consistently reserved his highest reverence for the works of ancient Greece; at times he told his youthful devotees to "'study the old Greeks, and only the Greeks,'" although Goethe appreciated his opportunity to have developed freely as a young writer prior to his mature obsession with the ancients (qtd. in Damrosch 2003: 13). Goethe may appear to have been somewhat of a traditionalist in the restrictions he tacitly or overtly recommended regarding what works were permissible for inclusion in world literary discourse, but he did not display any anachronistic partisanship in the "quarrel between the ancients and the moderns" when it came to his paradigm, for he valued *Weltliteratur* as a means to develop a cosmopolitan sensibility among modern European intellectuals and to improve the quality of contemporary poetic as well as critical works.

## The continuing relevance of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* paradigm for contemporary world literature discourse

The wide spectrum of leading critical theorists who continue to address the parameters of the *Weltliteratur* concept, most of whom give at least a passing mention to what they believe Goethe intended by the term, attests to the continuing relevance of world literature as a discursive and pedagogical domain in general, and to Goethe's perspectives on this matter in particular. One of the most seminal recent arguments in the ongoing debate was advanced by Franco Moretti in his essay "Conjectures on World Literature," first published in the year 2000. In this essay, Moretti develops the desideratum, drawing on Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory and in obvious contradistinction to the principle of "close reading" valorized by American

New Criticism, of "distant reading" as the ideal of a new world literature paradigm. Distant reading would bring "cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system," which is to say non-Western European cultures (Moretti 2004: 152) into an investigation of broadly global trends concerning the development of styles and genres in literature. He uses the metaphor of the "wave" to indicate his methodology. Whereas the "tree" analogy in the essay highlights developments in literature as moving from single points of origin to diversity, the wave signifies a homogenous pattern moving to swallow an originary multiplicity; how, for example, Hollywood films and the English language overwhelm discrete markets and tongues. He assumes that *Weltliteratur* in the thinking of both Goethe and Marx signifies a singularity (Moretti 2004: 149). With Marx, this was certainly the case; he saw a rather uniform proletariat-generated literature eventually dissolving the various national literatures (Marx and Engels 1959: 466). However, Goethe conceived of world literature rather differently, for a consistent feature of his paradigm is its inherent postulation of a dialectic between the particular and the general driving the world literary dialogue. As Claudio Guillén puts it: "Goethe started from the existence of some national literatures – thus making possible a dialogue between the local and the universal, between the one and the many" (Guillén 1993: 40). Bohnenkamp puts the matter somewhat differently but perhaps more precisely in noting that *Weltliteratur* does not signify a generalized, atemporal and transregionally valid literature resulting from the development of the world literary process (as, we might add, it does for Marx), but rather the revelation of the particular in relation to the "universally human," for the universal can only be perceived in the reflections – which is to say the concrete, diverse literary manifestations – that come to the fore in the productive process of the continuous reception she highlights in Goethe's paradigm (Bohnenkamp 2000: 205). In Moretti's system, both the tree and the wave metaphors signify a dynamic interchange between unity and diversity, and he incorporates this dialectic into his own genre theory, agreeing, for example, with the critical consensus that cultural movements toward the adoption of the modern novel consistently manifest themselves "as a compromise between foreign form and local materials" (Moretti 2004: 154). Moretti's "distant" reading is closer in spirit to Goethean *Weltliteratur* than he might acknowledge.

One of the harshest critics of the contemporary practice of world literature is Gayatri Spivak, though her displeasure with the practice, as enunciated in her book *Death of a Discipline* (2003), is focused on the pedagogical domain, specifically on what she regards as the global marketing of English-language world literature anthologies. Spivak's book sees an English-language and Anglo-American culture grounding a globalization theory which treats the planet as a virtual reality devoid of real human beings with discrete linguistic and cultural practices. She regards the planetary study of comparative literature as threatened by a monolingualism invading this discipline to such a degree that English-language world literature textbooks may become pervasive globally. She fears, for example, that Taiwanese students will someday read Chinese classics such as *The Dream of the Red Chamber* only in brief excerpts printed in world literature anthologies published in the United States (Spivak 2003: xii). Her solution to such a bleak prospect is to invest the discipline of comparative literature with the attention to cultural particularities and nuances that

can be gleaned through a depoliticized area studies approach. Goethe's *Weltliteratur* paradigm clearly values such attention to the local dimension of literature, as we have seen.

In a much earlier work, Spivak argued for an approach to translation that she terms "fraying," whereby the translator must "surrender to the text" and create an intimate, indeed loving link between the source and target languages between which she shuttles (Spivak 1992: 178, 181). Translation is central for Goethe in the commerce of world literature, and he regards a translation in which the target language is virtually surrendered to the nuances, rhythm, and even structure of the source language as the most advanced approach to this activity. Goethe's most cogent remarks on the practice of translation occur in the notes to the *West-östliche Divan*. Like Spivak, Goethe suggests an erotic giving-over of the self to "the linguistic rhetoricity of the original text," as Spivak describes her own approach (Spivak 1992: 187). In Goethe's terminology, while poetic translation at the first level provides an informative prose rendering of the original text, and the translator who operates at the second level inserts his own stylistic proclivities, rooted in his own tongue, in his rendering, the third-level translator more or less surrenders ("gibt … auf") the originality of his own nation and language. While such an approach tends not to be popular among the masses, it eventually imbues the translator's own tongue with greater elasticity and suppleness, stretching and challenging its apparently innate limits (Goethe 1948–54: vol. 3: 555–56). This enhancement of the national tongue through a productive, Spivakian surrender to the foreign work's rhetoricity bears a clear philosophical kinship to the enrichment of national literature through interchange with the foreign in Goethe's world literature paradigm.

While *Death of a Discipline* alludes to the way Anglo-American enterprise is coming to dominate the discourse and marketing of world literature, Pascale Casanova's *La république mondiale des lettres* (*The World Republic of Letters*, 1999) has as a central focus the mechanisms by which countries with a developed, globally influential literature dominate the very process by which works become part of the world literature pantheon through controlling the networks via which literature gains access to international reception and capitalized distribution. Western academic curricular decisions, internationally recognized literary prizes, decisions on what works should be translated: these domains, controlled by Western Europe (especially France and Great Britain) and the United States, guarantee the marginalization, surmountable only with great difficulty, of "small" literatures written in unfamiliar tongues. In underscoring how such hegemonic force fields, rather than immanent merit, drive the decisions concerning inclusion in or exclusion from world literature, Casanova notes Goethe's seminal role in defining the practices she describes through his highlighting of the commercial, marketing networks propelling *Weltliteratur*, an enterprise in which the translator functions "not only as an intermediary but also as a creator of literary value" (Casanova 2004: 13–14). Casanova also credits Goethe with a prescient grasp of the contestatory character, the competition among national interests on an international scale that characterized the emerging *Weltliteratur* paradigm (Casanova 2004: 40). Casanova thus underscores the continuing value of Goethe's concept for understanding the contemporary character of world literature and the various hegemonic institutions which drive it.

Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone: a new comparative literature* (2006) examines contemporary translation technologies as they continue to shape the globe's language politics in the post-9/11 world. Like Casanova, she sees translation today as a domain threatening the literary output from languages and nations considered peripheral. A new comparative literature would resist such linguistic hegemony by highlighting and transmitting language pluralism as well as helping to spread a creolism subversive of Anglophone and Francophone dominance on both intra- and international scales. She also expresses support for Moretti's effort to undermine cultural nationalism through a new conceptualization of world literature based on distant reading. In discussing Moretti's vision, she notes its basis in Goethean *Weltliteratur*'s "commitment to expansive cultural secularism" (Apter 2006: 41), a commitment she sees as also having been continued among the comparatists in whose work she grounds her articulation of "a new comparative literature," secular translators of cultures such as Spivak, Erich Auerbach, Leo Spitzer, and Edward Said. She characterizes Said's humanist efforts as "an anti-imperialist reinvention of Goethean *Weltliteratur*" which "comes into focus as part of an expanded worldliness" (Apter 2006: 93). Apter is correct about this, but one may add that the cosmopolitan, pre-imperialist, indeed subnational milieu generating and informing Goethe's *Weltliteratur* paradigm allows its continuous contemporary redeployment by comparatists such as Said, Casanova, Moretti, and Apter herself. Goethe's paradigm can also be valuable as a teaching tool; in my own practice, I have used it to help students grasp what "world literature" signifies as a concept, and to show them how to read in a manner allowing a dialectical perception of both the local particularities and universal themes they encounter in the world literature classroom (Pizer 2006: 138–49).

## Conclusion

The various elements constituting Goethe's *Weltliteratur* paradigm, enunciated at various times and in various venues, during the last years of his life, anticipate and help to shape many key issues discussed in contemporary debates concerning world literature as both a discursive concept and a pedagogical domain. The centrality of translation, international marketing networks, border-crossing interchange among authors and critics both influencing discrete national literatures and helping to give rise to a body of works transnational in purport, style, and even language: all of these constituent factors in today's discussions are anticipated by Goethe's pronouncements. This convergence across the ages is not primarily to be attributed to Goethe's prescience, though this played a role. One must also regard the continued relevance of *Weltliteratur* as stemming from parallels between 1820s Germany and the present day. Partly through ruthless oppression in the wake of the Congress of Vienna but also because of war weariness after decades of martial conflict ending only with the vanquishing of Napoleon, nationalism gave way briefly to a spirit of cosmopolitan intellectual exchange that faded in the 1830s and became ascendant once again only after the end of the Second World War. Technological, infrastructure, and transportation improvements also played a major role then and now

in creating the conditions for *Weltliteratur* in the 1820s and in our own time. There are, to be sure, major differences: the absolute domination of the global literary marketplace by a few languages, particularly English, was confined to Europe itself in the 1820s (when French was still the most widely used tongue), but now they threaten "peripheral" languages and cultures throughout the world. As our brief survey of contemporary debates has shown, critics will continue to draw upon Goethe's views on world literature in highlighting – and, in some instances, trying to counteract – this cultural homogenization and hegemony.

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# 2
# HUGO MELTZL AND "THE PRINCIPLE OF POLYGLOTTISM"

*David Damrosch*

Among the early proponents of world literature, none was more ambitious and intriguing than the Transylvanian comparatist Hugo Meltzl (1846–1908), co-founder and principal editor of the world's first journal of comparative literature, the *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*. We can still learn much today from Meltzl's wide-ranging efforts to promote a truly global grasp of world literature both in theory and in editorial practice, even as we can find a cautionary tale in the ultimate eclipse of his scholarly enterprise by a great-power rival.

Meltzl grew up among the German-speaking minority in Transylvania, then an outlying part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. First brought into Hungary in the fourteenth century as skilled artisans, the German population had come to be among the region's elite. Meltzl was born into a well-to-do merchant family, which had been granted a Hungarian title of nobility; Meltzl is therefore also known as Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz, and sometimes as Hugo von Meltzl. He attended Unitarian and Lutheran schools in his hometown of Bistritz and in the provincial capital of Kolozsvár, also known as Cluj or Klausenburg – a city whose shifting names already tell a tale of ethnic intermingling and competition among Hungarians, Romanians, and Germans. Now part of Romania, the city is currently named Cluj-Napoca, rebaptized to the greater glory of the Ceauşescu regime in honor of the region's early history as a Roman colony.

Meltzl learned Hungarian and Romanian only in school, where he concentrated on German philosophy and literature while also trying his hand at writing poetry in Hungarian. Both a Hungarian patriot and a cultural internationalist, he had an abiding interest in minority cultures, including the folk literature of the Transylvanian Gypsies. He went to Leipzig and Heidelberg for college and graduate study, writing a doctoral dissertation on Schopenhauer and his predecessors. Upon receiving his degree in 1872, he returned to his native region at age twenty-six to become Professor of German Language and Literature at the new Franz-Joseph-Universität in Cluj/Kolozsvár.

Named for the Habsburg emperor, the university had been founded that year with a double purpose: to spread the influence of German culture in the eastern wing of the empire and at the same time to promote "Magyarization," which in practice meant increasing the sway of Hungarian over Romanian culture and language in this ethnically mixed region. It is in this context that a locally born, Heidelberg-trained Hungarian-German academic could become a welcome candidate for a professorship, despite his lack of prior experience.

The youngest of the university's forty faculty, Meltzl found himself coexisting with colleagues of varying forms of nationalism and differing degrees of imperialism, together with some cosmopolitan idealists such as himself. Most important among these was the oldest member of the faculty, the Hungarian polymath Samuel Brassai (1800–97), Professor of Comparative Philology and also a mathematician, botanist, and theologian. Well into his eighties, Brassai continued to publish books on algebra, Sanskrit linguistics, and theology. In 1877 the two scholars joined together to found the world's first journal of comparative literature, which they conceived from the outset as a means to realize Goethe's dream of *Weltliteratur*, both as a body of texts and as a mode of international communication and exchange.

For Brassai, the young discipline of comparative literature was a logical extension of his work in comparative philology, not only in name but in cultural-political outlook. The new literary journal would combat the jingoistic nationalism often prominent in the work of Germanic philologists such as Jacob Grimm. A major developer of scientific philology ("Grimm's Law" identified key sound shifts between the classical and the Germanic languages), Grimm was also an ardent nationalist, which in his context meant taking a liberal stance against the often repressive rulers of the small principalities into which Germany was then divided. Published in the revolutionary year 1848, his two-volume *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* was explicitly intended to demonstrate linguistically the true unity of "our unnaturally divided fatherland," as he put it in a dedication to Georg Gottfried Gervinus, the most important German literary historian of his day. A strong advocate for national unity, Gervinus had inspired Grimm by constructing literary history as the history of a nation without visible borders, an emphasis signaled in the title of his monumental five-volume *Geschichte der poetischen Nationallitteratur der Deutschen* (1835–42). In his dedication to Gervinus, Grimm eloquently evoked "the people's freedom, which nothing can hinder any longer, of which the very birds twitter on the rooftop. … O, that it would come soon and never withdraw from us!" (Grimm 1980: iv–v). Carrying Gervinus's nationalistic emphasis into the linguistic realm, in the body of his book Grimm proudly proclaimed the national triumph of the German language, seen in the very shifts in consonants his law explained:

> Since the close of the first century the weakness of the Roman Empire had become manifest (even though its flame still flickered from time to time), and among the unconquerable Germans the awareness of their unstoppable advance into every region of Europe had grown ever stronger. … How else could it be, but that so forceful a mobilization of the people would stir up their language as well, shaking it out of its accustomed pathways and exalting it? Do not a certain courage and pride lie in the strengthening of voiced

> stop into voiceless stop, and voiceless stop into fricative? … Anyone who rejects this interpretation as fanciful, or who wishes to challenge it on the basis of isolated instances (which I wouldn't conceal), can never do justice to our language's most outstanding characteristics.
>
> (306–7)

At times, such nationalism could be countered by cosmopolitan perspectives that sought to transcend national cultural politics, yet in the nineteenth century cosmopolitanism itself was often a higher form of nationalism. The philosopher August Wilhelm Schlegel had given a clear expression of a nationalistic cosmopolitanism as early as 1804:

> Universalism, cosmopolitanism is the true German trait. For a long time our lack of a unified direction has placed us in an inferior position in relation to the limited and therefore more effective national tendencies of other peoples. But this lack, if transformed into something positive, becomes the totality of all directions and will establish superiority on our side. It is therefore not an all too sanguine hope, I believe, to think the time close when German will be the general language of communication of all civilized nations.
>
> (Schulz and Rhein 1973: 74)

By the 1870s, the unstoppable march of German fricatives had yielded a unified and powerful Germany and, as Schlegel had hoped, German was becoming a crucial language of civilization, or at any rate of international scholarly exchange. Yet though they were both trained in Germany, the Transylvanians Brassai and Meltzl envisioned a very different mode of scholarly exchange.

At first they published their journal under a triple Hungarian/German/French title, *Összehasonlító Irodalomtörténelmi Lapok / Zeitschrift für vergleichende Litteratur / Journal d'histoire des littératures comparées*. Rapidly moving beyond an emphasis on national comparisons, they began a "New Series" in 1879 under the expansive Latin title of *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* or "Journal for the Comparison of the Totality of Literature," in Haun Saussy's apt translation (Saussy 2006: 9). With Brassai already in his mid-seventies, Meltzl did most of the actual editing, and became the journal's sole editor upon Brassai's retirement in 1883.

Throughout its eleven years of existence, the journal was a shoestring operation, largely funded by Meltzl and Brassai themselves, enjoying a circulation of only a hundred at best. Yet the editors made up in enthusiasm what they lacked in resources. In a programmatic essay announcing the journal's purposes, Meltzl set forth the editors' intention as nothing less than "the *reform of literary history*, a reform long awaited and long overdue which is possible only through an extensive application of *the comparative principle*" (Meltzl 1877: 42). He argued that Goethe's cosmopolitan conception of *Weltliteratur* had been pressed into the service of narrowly nationalistic concerns, both in literary studies and in the parallel discipline of philology. Thus in his *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* – dedicated to Gervinus – Jacob Grimm had spoken of Goethe as the very embodiment of German identity:

"without him we never truly feel ourselves as Germans, so strong is the native power of national language and poetry" (Grimm 1848: iv). Meltzl's programmatic essay makes it clear that he wished to retrieve Goethe's conception of world literature from an emphasis on a national literature's absorption of foreign influences and its own impact abroad:

> A journal like ours, then, must be devoted at the same time to the art of translation and to the Goethean *Weltliteratur* (a term which German literary historians, particularly Gervinus, have thoroughly misunderstood). … As every unbiased man of letters knows, modern literary history, as generally practiced today, is nothing but an *ancilla historiae politicae* [a handmaid of political history] or even an *ancilla nationis*.
>
> (Meltzl 1877: 42–43)

As a telling example of the myopic distortions involved in such nationalistic literary history, Meltzl cites a German discussion of the aubade that traced its origin to Wolfram von Eschenbach, ignoring the fact that "Lieder of this type were sung eighteen centuries ago in China (as those contained in the *Shih Ching*) and are frequently found among the folksongs of modern peoples, for instance, the Hungarians" (43).

Here, Meltzl's example reveals the double strategy by which his journal sought to counter the literary nationalism of the European great powers: first, by widening the field to include masterpieces of other cultures such as China, and second, by expanding the European arena to include the literatures of smaller countries: in this instance, not at all randomly, his own Hungary. Where August Wilhelm Schlegel – and indeed Goethe – had looked forward to German as taking a prominent or even dominant role in cultural exchange, Meltzl and Brassai sought to showcase languages and literatures usually overlooked from great-power perspectives.

This desire led to their most dramatic editorial decision: to admit no fewer than ten "official languages" for their articles, with the journal's title printed in all ten languages. In a concession to identifiability, the Latin title is printed in large type, along with the German title (*Zeitschrift für vergleichende Litteratur*), followed by seven others in smaller type; last comes the Hungarian title, in medium-sized type, "like a modest innkeeper following his guests" as Meltzl later put it – in German – in a note "An unsere Leser" in the first issue of the New Series in 1879.

In keeping with their polyglot emphasis, Meltzl and Brassai established an editorial board of genuinely global scope, drawing on Braissai's wide contacts to enlist members from Hungary, Germany, England, France, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Portugal, Iceland, Sweden, Poland, Brazil, the United States, Turkey, India, Japan, Egypt, and Australia. Their editorial board of some two dozen members became the nucleus – and perhaps the entire membership – of what was probably the world's first Comparative Literature Association, the "Societas Comparationis Litterarum Universarum" or SCLU. By assembling so wide-ranging a team, and by founding their journal on "the Principle of Polyglottism," the editors sought at once to protect the individuality of smaller literatures and to explode nationalistic exclusivity altogether. As Meltzl said in his inaugural essay on "Present Tasks of Comparative Literature,"

> today every nation demands its own "world literature" without quite knowing what is meant by it. By now, every nation considers itself, for one good reason or another, superior to all other nations. … This unhealthy "national principle" therefore constitutes the fundamental premise of the entire spiritual life of modern Europe. … Instead of giving free rein to polyglottism and reaping the fruits in the future … every nation today insists on the strictest monoglottism, by considering its own language superior or even destined to rule supreme. This is a childish competition whose result will finally be that all of them remain – inferior.
>
> (46)

The *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* was intended to set this situation right, both by its radical mixing of languages and also by its broad literary strategies. Meltzl and Brassai developed a two-pronged approach: first, to compare masterpieces of global world literature (mostly composed in large countries with highly developed literary cultures), and second, to promote the study of oral and folk materials. These could be found in every country and language, and so the study of folksongs became a centerpiece of the journal's project, a powerful way to level the cultural playing field for countries not yet on the map of world masterpieces.

Meltzl can thus be seen as attempting a kind of synthesis of Goethe's elitist globalism with Herder's populist emphasis on the folk, making the *Acta* more an alternative within German cultural debate than an alternative to it. In its broad outlines, moreover, the journal's program can be seen, as David Marno has argued, as advocating Hungarian literature as a visible but subordinate strand within Austro-Hungarian culture, "a last position accessible to someone who wants to advocate the literature of a country that had lost its war for national independence just two decades earlier," while implicitly furthering the empire's suppression of Czech, Slovakian, Croatian, Serbian, and Romanian, none of which figured among the journal's ten "official languages" (Marno 2008: 40–41).

Operating within the German cultural diaspora and the Austro-Hungarian empire, Meltzl nonetheless set his sights well beyond the limits of imperial cultural politics. In his "Present Tasks of Comparative Literature," he urges attention to "the spiritual life of 'literatureless peoples,' as we might call them, whose ethnic individuality should not be impinged upon by the wrong kind of missionary zeal," and he goes on to condemn a recent Russian *ukaz* that had prohibited the literary use of Ukrainian in the Ukraine. Meltzl is so outraged by this action that he uses religious language to denounce it: "It would appear as the greatest sin against the Holy Spirit even if it were directed only against the folksongs of an obscure horde of Kirghizes instead of a people of fifteen million" (46). It was evidently the Russian censorship of minor literatures that caused Meltzl to exclude Russian from the ten "official languages" admitted to his journal – a remarkable decision, really, to punish Russia by excluding its hegemonic language from the pages of a young journal of enormous ambition but limited readership.

Discussions of globalization today sometimes use ecological metaphors to describe less-spoken languages and their literatures as endangered species; Meltzl was perhaps the first person ever to use such imagery. "In a time when certain animal species

such as the mountain goat and the European bison are protected against extinction by elaborate and strict laws," he remarks, "the willful extinction of a human species (or its literature, which amounts to the same thing) should be impossible" (46).

Meltzl's journal, then, opposed great-power hegemony and sought to protect the literatures of smaller nations and less commonly spoken languages, promoting contact and mutual appreciation of traditions whose distinctness should be preserved and even enhanced in the process. He was particularly concerned to distance his project from a leveling cosmopolitanism that would ultimately overwhelm smaller literatures:

> It should be obvious that these polyglot efforts have nothing in common with any kind of universal fraternization or similar international *nephelokokkugia* [Cloud-Cuckoo-Land]. The ideals of Comparative Literature have nothing to do with foggy, "cosmopolitanizing" theories. … It can safely be assumed that the purposes of Comparative Literature are more solid than that. It is, on the contrary, the *purely national of all nations* that Comparative Literature means to cultivate lovingly. … Our secret motto is: nationality as individuality of a people should be regarded as sacred and inviolable. Therefore, a people, be it ever so insignificant politically, is and will remain, from the standpoint of Comparative Literature, as important as the largest nation.
>
> (45)

How successful was the *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* in achieving these ambitious goals? Meltzl's journal is often alluded to in discussions of the early history of Comparative Literature, but (with the notable exception of a collection of essays edited by Horst Fassel in 2005) the journal's substantial output of 212 issues has rarely been examined directly. Fassel himself has commented that it is almost impossible for scholars in most locations to attempt a study of the journal, as few libraries contain any copies at all, and only a handful of libraries have anything approaching a complete set (Fassel 2002: 299). A direct study of the journal reveals a mixed situation of a pragmatic reality more constrained than the ambitious polyglottism suggested by the journal's ten official languages – let alone the utopian project of publishing articles "dans toutes les langues du monde," as Meltzl bravely proposed in 1879 (*Acta* 3(7–8): 96–97).

If it had truly been written in its ten official languages, the journal could not, after all, have been comprehensible to very many readers at all, and in actual practice the journal's working languages were chiefly two: German and Hungarian. In examining the articles written in four volumes covering the years 1879–82, I find that half of all the articles (76 out of 156) were written in German, while another 20 percent were written in Hungarian. The remaining 30 percent of the articles were written mostly in three languages (English, French, and Italian), with also a handful of short items in Latin.

No articles at all appear in such less-spoken "official" languages as Icelandic and Polish. Poems from around the world are regularly given in the original, but always with a translation into one of the journal's dominant languages. The dual emphasis

on Hungarian and German does embody to some degree the principles of localism and universality, considering German as a prime medium of international scholarly exchange, and yet almost from the beginning Meltzl found it impractical to carry out his ploygl ottal wish for every literary work to be analyzed in its own language. So the journal's polyglottism was far more limited in practice than in theory.

For its select readership, however, the *Acta* provided a lively venue for the sharing of ideas and information among its far-flung correspondents, and the journal gave Meltzl an opportunity to work out in practice his hopes for the promotion of Hungarian literature on the world stage. He pursued this goal with his double strategy of a focus both on transcendent masterpieces and on folk literature. In his view, Hungary had produced one writer of genuinely world-class stature: Sandor Petöfi. Already in 1868 Meltzl had published a German translation of Petöfi's lyrics; in the *Acta*, Meltzl devoted a continuing stream of articles to Petöfi's work. Over the course of the journal's life, Meltzl arranged for translations of lyrics by Petöfi into no fewer than thirty-two languages, and his analyses were intended to show a broad European public that here was a Hungarian poet who deserved a prominent place at the table of world literature.

Rather than seek to promote other established Hungarian writers of lesser literary merit, Meltzl placed his second great stress on his region's contribution to world folk poetry, showcasing lyrics not only in Hungarian but also in Romanian, and several times including Gypsy folksongs. In this effort he had some real success: the first English translation of Romanian folk poetry was published in New York in 1885, based on poems printed in the *Acta* (Phillips 1885). In his journal, Meltzl delighted in finding the circulation of folk motifs across wide geographical areas; in one article he discusses a lyric found in similar forms in Iceland, Sicily, and Hungary, concluding: "Das sind die Wunder der vergl. Litteratur!" ("These are the marvels of comp. lit.!" *Acta* 3(1878): 118–19). In the journal's second volume, Meltzl issued a call for contributions to an ambitious anthology to be named *Encyclopaedia of World Poetry*. Merging his two emphases, Meltzl asked his contributors to send in two poems from every possible country in the world: one folk poem and one literary work, each of them to be given in the original and in "a literal interlinear translation in one of the European languages" (*Acta* 2: 177). Sadly, this literary Noah's Ark never got off the ground.

Through his journal, Meltzl was working out a practical mode of comparison on a truly global scale, while at the same time he was creatively negotiating the cultural politics of relations between small and large literary powers. It is ironic, then, that the journal's impact was limited in his own time, and not only because of the polyglottism that would have made the journal difficult for many readers. Equally serious was the growth of comparative study in France and Germany, for most of the scholars located in these great powers had little of Meltzl's interest in the literatures of smaller nations – and less interest still in *working* with scholars in those nations.

According to Árpád Berczik, "the death blow" to Meltzl's struggling journal was the appearance in 1887 of a rival journal, published in Berlin under the editorship of Max Koch, a professor at Marburg. This new and better-placed journal threatened to siphon off readers and contributors from Meltzl's journal, and, as Meltzl noted with evident distress, Koch's title, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende*

*Litteraturgeschichte*, was suspiciously close to the *Acta*'s own German title. Though Meltzl likely knew Koch, it was particularly galling that he learned of the new journal not from Koch himself but only through newspaper reports. In a plaintive editorial note, Meltzl tried to rally his readers, not precisely to boycott his new rival, but at least to stay with him as well:

> We have recently learned from news reports that a journal of comparative literary history is supposed to be starting publication in Berlin. As pleased as we are that even in Goethe's homeland this great branch of comparative literature … is finding a freestanding home, we must equally lament the – surely coincidental! – choice of a title, which is bound to cause much confusion with the German title of the *Acta Comparationis*. We therefore wish here to plead in advance for care to be taken, so that at least the learned public may note the difference between the *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literatur* (since January 1877) and the *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* (since Summer 1886).
>
> (quoted in Berczik 1978: 98–99)

Koch's journal must have seemed to Meltzl to represent not merely a personal affront but also a real step backward in scholarly terms. Written entirely in German, its articles were contributed almost exclusively by German scholars, and their emphasis was heavily on German literary relations; the first issue, for example, includes articles on Goethe, Uhland, Kleist, Lessing, and "Germanische Sagenmotive im Tristan-Roman," among other German-oriented articles, while also including articles on Chinese poetry and African fables. The Berlin journal did periodically treat folk poetry as well, and if Meltzl felt that Koch was trying to steal his thunder, he could hardly have thought it a coincidence that the early treatments often focused on Transylvanian and Hungarian folklore. The very first issue includes a short article on a theme from *Tristan* as found in Transylvanian Gypsy and Romanian poetry, while the second issue features a prominent article "Zur Litteratur und Charakteristik des magyarischen Folklore."

Neither of these articles cites Meltzl or his journal at all, nor did Koch mention the *Acta* in his inaugural essay for his journal. There Koch ranges widely over the tasks of comparative study (source study, aesthetics, comparative literary history, interarts comparison, and folklore) and he mentions dozens of precursors in comparative study from the seventeenth century to his own day, yet the people he discusses are almost exclusively German writers and scholars. He concludes by emphasizing the national value of comparative study: "German literature and the advancement of its historical understanding will form the starting point and the center of gravity for the endeavors of the *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Litteraturgeschichte*" (Koch 1886: 12).

Meltzl kept his journal going for another year after the Berlin journal appeared, but then gave up; Koch's journal had won out. More broadly, the great-power perspective became dominant in Comparative Literature for a full century thereafter. In 1960, the Swiss-born comparatist Werner Friederich, founder of the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, noted wryly that the term "world literature" was rarely being applied to anything like the full world:

> Apart from the fact that such a presumptuous term makes for shallowness and partisanship which should not be tolerated in a good university, it is simply bad public relations to use this term and to offend more than half of humanity. … Sometimes, in flippant moments, I think we should call our programs NATO Literatures – yet even that would be extravagant, for we do not usually deal with more than one fourth of the 15 NATO-Nations.
>
> (Friederich 1960: 14–15)

Yet even Friederich was not arguing for a return to Meltzl's breadth of perspective; on the contrary, he recommended dropping the term "world literature" altogether. It is only in recent years that comparatists have begun to recover the fully global perspective that Goethe anticipated and that Meltzl's journal truly began to embody. We can now return to the origins of comparative literature with new appreciation for the complexities of the pioneers' situations, nowhere better represented than in Meltzl's polyglot anticosmopolitanism. Little read in Meltzl's lifetime, the *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* makes fascinating reading today, and it can help us to create a study of world literature that truly deserves the name.

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# 3
# GEORG BRANDES
## The telescope of comparative literature

*Svend Erik Larsen*

### The activist critic

In 1923 the most important work of the Danish literary critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927), *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* 1–6, saw its sixth Danish edition since its first publication in 1872–90. By 1923 complete translations had appeared in German (two translations), in English, Russian, Japanese and Yiddish, some of them in reprints, while single volumes had been published in French, Czech, Finnish and Polish. After Brandes' death in 1927 new complete translations came out in Chinese and Spanish as well as reprints of some of the earlier translations. In 1923 Brandes, 80 years old and fully aware of his European, even global, fame, added a short new preface in which he declared his loyalty to the ideas that he had first promulgated fifty years earlier as a young, controversial comparatist.

His debut in 1866 was a sharp pamphlet, *The Dualism in Our Most Recent Philosophy* [Dualismen i vor nyeste Philosophie], against a leading Danish philosopher, Rasmus Nielsen, who claimed that faith and knowledge can coexist harmoniously as equally important roads to grasping reality, as long as we keep them apart. Brandes disagreed: conflicting ideas about reality can never coexist peacefully. In this pamphlet Brandes the iconoclastic *enfant terrible* of academia was born, almost always preferring to side with ideas that pitted him against the cultural and academic establishment and its representatives, be they in literary studies, in politics or in the cultural debate of his day.

Already when he first launched the project of *Main Currents* as a lecture series at the University of Copenhagen in 1871, he had pointed to debate, or rather controversy, as a permanent challenge for critic and poet alike: "That literature is alive today is shown by the fact that it sets up problems for debate" (*Hovedstrømninger* 1: 18).[1] Critical language must be used to take a stand. In literature itself, however, language, in all its creative multidimensionality, from sound patterns and syntax to larger psychological and thematic structures, exposes the full complexity of ideas in their contrapuntal coexistence with counter-currents, permanently challenging the reader's world view.

Brandes' aim was to situate literature at the point where it takes issue with the fundamental and not necessarily reconcilable ideas that shape human life in the

contemporary world, particularly in Europe but also, and with increasing importance for him, in a global milieu. He was especially concerned with the often conflicting connections between a national culture and its transnational context, without which any conception of its local particularity would prove to be an illusion. Any attempt in literature and culture to seal off a local culture from the world at large and deny its complicity with it became subject to his acid attacks. Particularly in his home country, Denmark, he frowned upon the inwardness of nationalism and individual self-sufficiency which were in marked contrast to the critical national and individual self-awareness that he advocated. Literature was the foundation of this project and comparative studies was its tool:

> The comparative approach to literature has a dual nature: its brings us closer to what is foreign to us in such a way that we can appropriate it, and at the same time distances us from what is familiar to us so that we can survey it. One never clearly observes what is right in front of our eyes nor what is too distant. The academic study of literature hands us a telescope: one end magnifies, the other reduces. The heart of the matter is to use it in such a way that we can make up for the illusions of immediate perception.
> (*Hovedstrømninger* 1: 14)

## The basic ideas and their critical practice

Brandes was an engaged intellectual in the Sartrean sense, a *citoyen*, and his world view is rooted in the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, promoting human emancipation from the constraints of religion and local traditions. Nevertheless, he was less preoccupied with the utopian vision itself than with the difficulties of its realization, which he viewed with a growing pessimism, stimulated by the foreboding of World War I and the cataclysm itself. Brandes himself pointed to his inspiration from Voltaire and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, to whom he devoted huge monographs in 1915 and 1916: "The eighteenth century's keywords and slogans were free thought in science and pure humanity in poetry. Its major proponents are Voltaire and Goethe" (*Hovedstrømninger* 1: 233). Brandes was also well acquainted with German philosophy, and in particular with Hegel, whose philosophy at that time was central to the university curriculum in Denmark and left its mark in *Main Currents*.

The six volumes of *Main Currents* cover European literature from 1800 to 1848, focusing on the driving forces of European culture and literature during a period which was still undergoing fervent change. Brandes regarded *Main Currents* as the last act of a historical drama unfolding in the image of a tidal wave of action and reaction, in a tripartite rhythm (*Hovedstrømninger* 6: 376–77). First, the idea of freedom handed down from the eighteenth century was turned around as the conservative codification of culture and society gained momentum, particularly manifest in the works of the emigrant writers such as Mme de Staël; then, a new surge of personal and political emancipation emerged across Europe, with Byron's death in 1824 as the turning point; and finally came the revolutions of 1848. All three phases are marked by the tidal movement of a reactionary pull and an emancipatory push

in a dynamic complexity that finds multiple literary expressions within a dialectical quasi-Hegelian framework:

> Do not misunderstand me as though I took reaction as such to be a backwards step. Far from it! Quite the contrary! A true, comprehensive and corrective reaction means progress. But a reaction like that is forceful, short and does not degenerate. After for some time having fought the excesses of the previous epoch, after having exposed what then was suppressed, it incorporates the valuable elements from the previous period, comes to terms with it and continues its movement. But this is not what happened here [after 1800].
> (*Hovedstrømninger* 1: 16)

The translation of this ideological program into critical practice opened up a new way of both thinking and writing about literary history, exemplified in the six volumes: *Emigrant Literature* [Emigrantlitteraturen] (1872), *The Romantic School in Germany* [Den romantiske Skole i Tydskland] (1873), *The Reaction in France* [Reaktionen i Frankrig] (1874), *Naturalism in England* [Den engelske Naturalisme] (1875) (naturalism refers to nature poetry), *The Romantic School in France* [Den romantiske Skole i Frankrig] (1882), and *Young Germany* [Det unge Tyskland] (1890). For the first time "European literature is treated as the totality it has been since the Renaissance" (Nolin in Hertel and Kristensen 1980: 26; Moritzen 1922: xiv).

When Brandes pointed in the 1923 preface to the mixed reception of the first volumes, he put his finger on exactly that point. The aim of his undertaking was not to compile an anthology of accumulated essays on separate national literatures, nor did he want to offer a survey of quasi-causal links between individual texts and authors reaching across national boundaries and to turn them into ideal models. Instead, Brandes shifted from one country or one chronological slice in one volume to another in the next, and then back again, always zooming in on the cultural space where the development of the transnational driving forces in a particular moment appeared to be most forceful. He looked for the troubled tidal wave of the quest for freedom where it had the most decisive impact at a certain time, in a certain place, in a certain genre or through a certain literary movement. France, Germany and England stand out as the shifting centers of this process, other literatures being rather its result than its impetus.

At the age of thirty he was already formed as a comparatist with a focus on literature, old or new, as a cultural force in a contemporary perspective; but also as a comparatist who bridged between literary studies and topics of a broader cultural and political nature. He was also a comparatist in search of a method, here outlined through his own critical practice as the construction of authors' portraits, mostly inspired by Hippolyte Taine, with whom he studied in Paris during 1866–67, but also by Charles Sainte Beuve.

## The global experience

After his studies in Paris Brandes started to travel, and he continued to do so incessantly: from Finland in the North to Italy in the South, from the United States

in the West to Russia in the East. From Berlin, Poland, Russia and Greece he wrote book-length travel accounts in which literary and historical surveys are combined with political analyses and reports in reviews, articles and columns (*Samlede* 11). He took up residence in Berlin from 1877 to 1883, but also stayed for extended periods of time in France and Italy. Through comments on literary works and cultural life elsewhere on the globe he also included Asia, the Middle East, New Zealand and South America. Through his extensive correspondence with international personalities as well as with young authors from all over the world who sought his advice on revision or publication of manuscripts, he often had first-hand records of the places he referred to in his literary criticism and in cultural and political debate.

In France he was at home in the circles of the cultural and political elite, having Georges Clemenceau and Anatole France among others as his personal friends. But he was never accepted at the Sorbonne, where Ferdinand Brunetière was his most renowned opponent, a position that was fueled by their opposite roles in the spectacular *affaire Dreyfus* (1894–1906), where Brandes vehemently defended the Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus who was falsely accused of high treason (Clausen 1984). Brandes' works are not widely translated into French, compared to the many editions and re-editions in German and English. In his critical obituary of 1927, Fernand Baldensperger condemned Brandes' work as "obsolete, let us admit it after all, due to the superficiality of its knowledge and the lack of substance of its edifice" (Baldensperger 1927: 143).

In other places, however, his role as *bête noir* provoked the opposite reaction. His rebellious stance was applauded in China in the post-imperial cultural transition after 1905, with Lu Xun as a central mediator and based on Japanese, English and notably German translations. The anonymous obituary of 1927 stressed that Brandes "violently attacked the antiquated outlook on life prevailing in Danish society. He was met with hateful eyes" (Hertel and Kristensen 1980: 233). Also, Brandes' repeated lecture tours to England from the 1890s and his visit to the United States 1914 had positive receptions in spite of the deficiencies of his spoken English, and already in 1892 the University of Chicago had offered him a chair.

Nevertheless, Brandes never met with universal approval, and particularly in Denmark and Germany his reputation never ceased to oscillate between negative and positive extremes. Through his affiliation with the Danish daily *Politiken*, founded in 1884 by his brother Edvard among others, he sided with the political left. After a heated public debate he was turned down in 1891 for a chair in comparative literature at the University of Copenhagen, but from 1902 he was given the right to take the title of professor.

## The contemporary perspective

The contemporary importance of literature and criticism remained crucial to Brandes. Whenever possible he corrected and adapted re-editions and translations of his work for the situation in which they were now published. "He is contemporary who presents the great qualities in a person from the past like Voltaire," he notes (*Bogen* 202). But more importantly, Brandes also adopted new ideas to further qualify his idea of individual freedom and historical dynamics.

In the 1880s he read the then unknown Friedrich Nietzsche. Here he found an answer to his key problem: how are the fermenting ideas of cultural progress turned into great art and how can we study this process? His answer was drawn directly from Nietzsche: through the great and unique personalities of history, transcending their own time. His first study of Nietzsche, "Aristocratic Radicalism" [Aristokratisk Radikalisme] (1889), gave Nietzsche European fame, but this presentation was modified in 1890 by "The Great Man, the Source of Culture" [Det store Menneske, Kulturens Kilde]. The first study not only stresses the importance of transgressive individual freedom from cultural constraints, but also underlines the right of the superior human being to bypass those constraints by suspending certain moral and democratic principles. The Danish philosopher Harald Høffding, among others, wrote a sharp rejoinder, "Democratic Radicalism," pointing to Brandes' dangerous self-sufficient elitism. In the next paper Brandes downplayed his radicalism, changed "aristocratic" to "great" and placed more emphasis on the capacity of the great personality to embrace the conflicting dimensions of his time and thereby, on behalf of humankind, to move the cultural process onto a new level.

Here Brandes developed a comparative method and a genre: the monograph portraying great authors and historical personalities. He composed a series of huge monographs on representative individuals who have been instrumental in the unfolding of human history, an effect that charges their works with contemporary significance. With the shift in focus from the historical processes in *Main Currents* to the great individuals behind the processes, a scent of hero-worshipping can be detected as more than a mere whiff, although Brandes stressed the endurance of their greatness rather than its superiority. The series consists of *William Shakespeare*, 1–3 (1895–96), *Wolfgang Goethe*, 1–2 (1915), *François Voltaire*, 1–2 (1916), *Cajus Julius Cæsar*, 1–2 (1918) and *Michelangelo Buonarroti*, 1–2 (1921). This group was accompanied by smaller monographs on Søren Kierkegaard, Benjamin Disraëli, Ferdinand Lasalle, Heinrich Heine, Henrik Ibsen, Kropotkin, and Armand Carrel, among others, that appeared between 1877 and 1921.

The first of the major monographs, *William Shakespeare*, is also the first comprehensive study of Shakespeare's work in its entirety. The English translation of 1898 saw many reprints and paved the way for a translation of *Main Currents* in 1901–5. Through meticulous readings of Shakespeare's entire work, focusing on the characters, Brandes constructs Shakespeare as a personality, more complex than heroic, who becomes a prism for larger historical processes and thereby remains as contemporary as any modern writer.

This type of portrait also showed Brandes as capable of crafting a good story for a broad readership. Enhancing the impact of literature in contemporary culture was essential to him, as is exemplified by an essay "On Reading" [Om Læsning] (1899). His numerous talks for both learned and unspecialized audiences at home and abroad earned him a deserved reputation as an engaged, at times even a charismatic speaker. Brandes' style is sharp and vibrant, with plenty of quotable phrases, and he saw this as one of the reasons for the harsh criticism he met from colleagues, precisely because he wanted to be "now critical, now educating, neither completely a scholar nor entirely an artist, but a blending of the two hard to categorize" (*Hovedstrømninger* 1: 12). But between 1903 and 1926 this quality also made him a

Nobel prize nominee thirteen times, following recommendation by various Danish, Scandinavian and international supporters, but without success (Jørgensen 2009: 49).

## Brandes and world literature

Brandes' monograph on Goethe ends with the following words:

> When Goethe died the term *World Literature*, which he had created, had become a reality and through the united efforts of many people he had himself become the center of world literature.
>
> (*Goethe* 2: 331)

However, it is only in the essay "World Literature" [Verdenslitteratur] (1899) that Brandes discussed the concept of world literature directly. But the globalized perspective permeates his entire work, and has an increasing presence from the end of the nineteenth century. Particularly in his lesser known and smaller texts, Brandes anticipated some of the essential points of discussions that are now central to the study of world literature.

### *The diffraction of local literatures*

The essay "World Literature" is a follow-up to Goethe's scattered remarks from the 1820s (Larsen 2008; Madsen 2004). For a start Brandes reminds us of the progress of science as a global intellectual process and of the travelogues of nineteenth-century scientific expeditions. He adds that advances in transportation, communication, the modern press, and also translations accelerated the global process. There is no universal idealism at work here, as in Goethe, but concrete, globalized cultural encounters and interactions.

He defined world literature as a locally anchored literature that transcends its local constraints and opens the local perspective to a larger world. Some works will be translated, others not, some of them are written in languages which at present are expanding languages, others not. But the heart of the matter is the opening up of the local perspective towards the diversity of the translocal world. A literature that is immediately understandable everywhere may for that very reason be deprived of all "vigor" (*Samlede* 12: 28) simply because it does not belong to any concrete historical context. If something is written in order to be marketed as world literature, it is therefore highly probable that it is completely irrelevant.

> The world literature of the future will become all the more captivating the more the mark of the national appears in it and the more heterogeneous it becomes, as long as it retains a universally human aspect as art and science.
>
> (*Samlede* 12: 28)

Brandes' earlier characterization of comparative studies in the image of a telescopic dual perspective corresponds to this dialectics: we can, and must, look at literature

from two alternating or rather complementary positions, through both the magnifying and the diminishing lenses.

### *The globalized cultural approach*

The reason to study literature in a world literature perspective does not derive from an immanent literary or aesthetic point of departure. When literature, old or new, today circulates in a diverse global culture of translocal exchanges and conflicts this perspective becomes the necessary point of departure for literary studies.

Brandes could not agree more. But his approach to literature as a battlefield of ideas became increasingly historically concrete during his six years in Berlin, when he saw the nationalism of the rising Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm. Already in articles and reports from the 1880s he was warning against the consequences of militant nationalism. He clearly recognized the frightening prospect: not just another war in the world, but the world itself at war. His ironic rhetorical analysis of the emperor's speech in July 1900 to German volunteer troops bound for China can still serve as a model for how to debunk pompous rhetoric in global politics (*Samlede* 17: 74–77). His 1914 book *The World at War* [Verdenskrigen] contains a penetrating analysis of the threatening developments around the globe that made him foresee the coming war. The book came out in German and English and had gone to four augmented printings by 1916, now including also his correspondence with political and cultural personalities reacting to the first edition and his earlier articles.

As Brandes saw the war as a result of parallel and conflicting nationalisms, he could not side with any of the parties, which made him *persona non grata* in Germany and ruined his long friendship with Georges Clemenceau and Anatole France. He could see cultural and literary trends only on a global scale in the network of nations, not on the level of any individual nation.

As a corollary to his growing awareness of the globalized context of modern culture, he also became aware of the troubled position of minorities. He spoke up loudly in their defence against suppression by regional powers – Danes in Northern Germany, Finns in Russia, Jews in Poland, and especially the Armenians in Turkey, whom he saw in 1900 as victims of a genocide. On the basis of accounts from eyewitnesses whom he knew personally, in his booklet on Armenia he revealed the atrocities as vividly as in any post-Holocaust account (*Samlede* 17: 3–20). In Brandes' view, any local culture is the result of a permanent dialogue across local boundaries – linguistically, ideologically, politically – inducing the diversity of the larger world into the local culture. His criticism is focused precisely on the measures that prevent minority cultures from participating in the translocal world on their own conditions, but not to promote the nostalgic conservation of local cultures.

### *Transnational themes*

Even as he was writing in the heyday of the nation-state, Brandes discussed individual literatures and authors in transnational cultural terms, often related to concrete cases (Houe 2007). From a political angle, this was the case in *The World at War*, including a new chapter written in 1917 on the sufferings of the Armenians, and it

was also the case in his engagement from 1897 to 1906 with Emile Zola, among others, in the appeal to the French and European public to support a fair trial for Alfred Dreyfus (Clausen 1984). From a literary angle, his late essay "On the Future of European Literature" [Spørgsmaalet om den evropæiske Literaturs Fremtid] (1921) shows his literary preferences. He diagnoses three trends: the formalistic experiments, the religious and metaphysical dogmatism, and a broadly oriented literature in simple forms taking issue with the great transnational themes of the twentieth century. He goes with the last. Brandes would have been sympathetic to the resurfacing contemporary debate on cosmopolitanism and also to central global themes of literature: risk society, migration, trauma and forgiveness, international justice or genocide.

### *Methodology*

To mention theory and methodology together when discussing Brandes is close to a contradiction. His central focus was the study of character inside and outside of fiction. He cultivated himself as an empathetic reader, guided by his passionate ideas on emancipation and his sensitivity to language. Although he was an avid reader and a rapid writer, he was aware that he could not read everything first hand. But he was not cut out for teamwork. Now and then he drew too-easy conclusions from second-hand reading, and he did not always control the fine line between paraphrase, quotation and his own writing. But distant reading in Franco Moretti's sense could never be Brandes' declared method (Moretti 2000). He wanted to have his nose in the texts. In his obituary on Taine he found that the heavy reliance on a natural science paradigm was of no great importance. What counted was that Taine approached the texts through an empathetic understanding of the author's personality (*Samlede* 7: 57).

But, on the other hand, Brandes is neither unsystematic nor arbitrary in his approach. As he says in the conclusion to the last volume of *Main Currents*: "It goes without saying that the fundamental point of view adopted here [in *Main Currents*] is a personal one. [ … ] The personal view point is, however, not arbitrary" (*Hovedstrømninger* 6: 377) The common denominator in his critical practice is a *pars-pro-toto* reading. The great person, the local culture and language, a character, a set of images or a genre were seen as representative parts of a larger and diverse cultural context.

The same goes for his textual readings: in the essay "The Infinitely Small and the Infinitely Large in Poetry" [Det uendeligt Smaa og det uendeligt Store i Poesien] of 1869, he read a passage from *Henry VI, Part 1* by Shakespeare with Danish Romantic drama as its negative contrast. The analysis is modified and incorporated into *William Shakespeare* (1: Ch. 24) (Bourguignon 2010: 129–41). His focus is the role of detail in literature: how the imponderabilia of a text not only add concreteness and specificity to a text, but also contribute to its larger clusters of meaning. He points to the scene where Hotspur is belittled by his wife, Lady Percy, after he has refused to disclose his plans to her (Act II, sc. iii). She just needs to bend his little finger and threatens to break it, and then he talks. From this detail Brandes read the frailty of power, the contrast between power and weakness, and he captured the whole conflicting thematic of the historical play and the complexity of its characters.

Also in 1869 Hans Christian Andersen, an author of European fame in his own day, is read in a *pars-pro-toto* perspective, here regarding the capacity of his writing to be translated and travel the world because of a linguistic particularity. Andersen created an innovative prose with a strong local imprint, but by exploiting two details, the freedom of spoken language and a child's concrete and oblique perspective, he developed discursive strategies so elementary that they are recognizable across cultural boundaries and facilitate adequate translations (*Samlede* 2). In his 1899 essay on world literature, Brandes develops the translation perspective further and speaks trenchantly of the imbalance of power enjoyed by "major" literary languages (French, German, and English) over the greater difficulties that authors in smaller literary cultures encounter in entering a transnational literary sphere. Here he cited Andersen as a prime example of a minor author praised abroad, while a Danish giant such as Kierkegaard was ignored. But with the German translation (1879) of his monograph *Søren Kierkegaard* (1877) Brandes marked the beginning of Kierkegaard's international fame.

After his heyday as one of the most renowned comparatists on the European and also global scene from the turn of the century and into the 1930s, Brandes fell into oblivion and became "the lonely Dane" (Wellek 1955). *Main Currents* and the huge monographs, together with the sheer size of his work and its wide-ranging references, are overwhelming, but do not in themselves secure him a central position. Practicing the dual telescopic principle of comparatism on Brandes himself will, however, bring him closer to us. We should regard the bulky volumes that made him famous through the diminishing end of the comparative telescope, and then, through the magnifying lens, direct our attention towards his basic ideas about literature and comparative studies, together with a number of his smaller texts. Then he again comes into view as an active partner in the development of world literature studies.

## Note

1 All quotations from Brandes are translated by me from the Danish editions referred to in the bibliography. If English translations are available, they can be found after the Danish title with the year of their first edition.

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# 4
# RICHARD MOULTON AND THE "PERSPECTIVE ATTITUDE" IN WORLD LITERATURE

*Sarah Lawall*

World literature, for Richard Green Moulton (1849–1924), is not an independent entity but an *angle of perspective* brought to bear on universal literature, itself the "sum total of all literatures" (*World Literature and Its Place in General Culture*: 6; hereafter *W*). This angle of perspective is both unified (a "reflection of the unity of all literature," *W*: 7) and still incomplete, since we can never grasp the whole as such and must always settle for working within our limited field of vision. Innovative in recognizing the role of perspective and in implementing his "inductive" theory of scientific literary criticism, Moulton is more conventional in his reliance on idealized wholes (universal truths, a common human nature, the progress of civilization) as anchor points for interpretation. His analysis focuses on masterpieces, and, if he criticizes lists of "best books," it is because such lists are useless when not grounded in a "rational scheme of connection" (*W*: v) – a scheme his literary theory aims to provide. Global literature, as a selection of writings from around the world, has little in common with Moulton's theory of world literature, for which "a given point of view, presumably the national standpoint of the observer" (*W*: 6) determines both the subject-matter and the shape of the analysis.

In practice, his studies of world literature resolve into the interaction of two principles: history and literature, or "historic connection" and "intrinsic literary value" (*W*: 9), both related to literature rather than to existing historical, linguistic or ethnological scholarship. The historic connection is defined by the reader's perspective; basically a "National Literary Pedigree." The literary principle examines a text's internal structures. Moulton defends "Intrinsic Literary Interest" against the dominant philological approach (*W*: 8). This defense is coordinated with instructions on how to read at the most basic level (*The Modern Reader's Bible for Schools: the New Testament*: 2; hereafter *MRBS*). Sharing the contemporary fascination with science,

he stresses the importance of scientific method in learning to read a text "naturally" (without scholarly or theological preconceptions) in order to grasp both a literal meaning and, subsequently, its cultural significance.

Educated at London University (B.A. 1869) and Christ's College, Cambridge (B.A. 1874, M.A. 1877), Moulton echoes many familiar issues and beliefs of the later nineteenth century. Whether describing "our English civilization" and its precursors (*W*: 10) or establishing elaborate tables of the relation of civilizations, he never questions prevailing concepts of civilization or of civilizational progress. It is the universal aspect of this progression that appeals to Moulton, who links world literature and civilization as higher products of humanity and argues that both should be studied inductively and from the observer's point of view (*W*: 435).

Moulton proposes a theory of literary criticism that relies on scientific method and thus directly opposes current "judicial" criticism based on taste or authority. Alluding to the recent emergence of comparative philology as a recognized scientific discipline, he lays claim to similar status for literary criticism. His inductive criticism will enable the reader to analyze basic textual evidence and proceed, step by step, to an understanding of the laws of literature "in itself" (*Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*: 21; hereafter *S*) – a model of logical inquiry that also echoes the current influence of German philosophic idealism (the "Ding an sich"). Nor is there any conflict with theological interpretation, for literary criticism allows one to read the Bible without distortion and thus "it is a necessary adjunct to the proper spiritual interpretation" ("The Bible as Literature," 5; hereafter *BL*).

Moulton's numerous works on the Bible are aimed at a large contemporary audience of general readers who are eager to improve their condition through education and knowledge of major cultural texts. Such readers may well have a Bible in the home (Vincent 1989: 174), but they have found it difficult to read: existing commentary is either "smothered by reverence" (*BL*: 3) or guided by a Higher Criticism devoted to issues of language and history. Moulton confronts these issues in a series of studies throughout his career, most explicitly in *The Modern Reader's Bible: a Series of Books from the Sacred Scriptures Presented in Modern Literary Form* (1896–98).

Moulton's firm belief in universal truths as revealed in the Bible cannot be doubted, nor can his conviction that historical truths are revealed in great literature. He describes the Hebrew and Christian Bibles as the living voice of history (*MRBS*: 4): "one who reads the New Testament is watching the birth of the modern world. … the New Testament is literature, and here the revolution of the world is speaking to us with its own voice." Yet Moulton's critical strategies are thoroughly secular: he preaches a theory of reading, not religious symbolism, and he proselytizes only for the system of University Extension, in which college-level courses were presented to the general public outside the university by itinerant lecturers. In 1890, Moulton visited the United States, where he lectured widely on the English University Extension Movement and helped to found the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching.

Moulton returned to England for another year as extension lecturer, this time at the University of London. After receiving a Ph.D. in English from the University of Pennsylvania, he was appointed Professor of Literature (English) at the University of Chicago, where he gave traditional academic lectures but also taught extension

courses until 1901, when he became a Professor of Literary Theory and Interpretation and head of the Department of General Literature. He remained faithful to the concept of University Extension, going so far as to reproduce arguments from his 1890 lectures in the conclusion to *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture* ("The Place of World Literature in Education").

Moulton's dedication to teaching is evident throughout his career. From the time of his first book in 1885, his publications are conceived as pedagogic introductions to the subject at hand, and include not only references to his own teaching but also tables, diagrams, sample syllabi, and suggested readings and topics. His interest in the reader's angle of perspective, which governs the concept of world literature and a related theory of literature (*The Modern Study of Literature*, 1915; hereafter *M*) may well derive from an observation of actual student attempts to grasp difficult texts. The first preface to *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* proposes its use "as an educational manual" based on "ten years' experience in connection with the Cambridge University Extension" (*S*: viii).

Shakespeare's importance as a touchstone for literary criticism reappears in a broader cultural framework in *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture*, where his work constitutes one of the five "literary bibles" and is considered a catalytic "force in civilization" (*W*: 436). The early study lays out the principles of an objective, "inductive" theory of criticism based on scientific method, and attacks the "judicial" criticism ("gossip applied to art and called criticism," *W*: 28) that has interpreted Shakespeare in diverse ways, following cultural bias or philological scholarship. Moulton describes inductive literary criticism as an intrinsic criticism that depends on step-by-step analysis of textual evidence and on the correlation of details. "*Interpretation in literature is of the nature of a scientific hypothesis, the truth of which is tested by the degree of completeness with which it explains the details of the literary work as they actually stand*. That will be the true meaning of a passage, not which is the most worthy, but which most nearly explains the words as they are" (*S*: 25).

The fifteen studies of individual plays are intended to counteract a prevailing impression that Shakespeare, celebrated for his presentation of human nature, was careless in matters of technique. Moulton examines many of the best-known plays (*The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, and *King Lear*) to show that the playwright was not only a master of plot construction but an innovator of dramatic technique. Although his character studies are provocative and still reprinted in anthologies of Shakespeare criticism, he concentrates on structural elements: contrasts and groupings, the technical analysis of plots (summarized in the Appendix, *S*: 399–416), and divisions and subdivisions of dramatic technique (arranged in a tree-like table, *S*: 398). This attention to groupings and relationships reflects Moulton's view of scientific method, which divides in order to understand: "Science, like every other product of the human mind, marks its progress by continuous differentiation: the perpetual subdivision of the field of enquiry, the rise of separate and ever minuter departments as time goes on" (*S*: 320). The process of division, subdivision, and the discerning of ensuing "fundamental divisions" (*S*: vi) persists as an exploratory device and will mean, on the level of world literature, research into the "English pedigree" and its "collateral" lines.

In *The Ancient Classical Drama: A Study in Literary Evolution* (hereafter *ACD*) Moulton continues his discussion of dramatic technique within a larger cultural context. He is a strong advocate of reading translations, both to broaden the scope of traditional classical education and to acquaint the general public with ancient drama. Moulton concludes by comparing ancient drama with modern Romantic drama (Shakespeare), and, with characteristic pedagogic verve, illustrates the comparison by recasting Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the form of an ancient tragedy: "our adapted *Macbeth* must take shape as an alternation of scenes and odes, the whole bound together by the Chorus … " (*ACD*: 225). Such concrete examples are embedded within broad generalizations about periods and genres that move towards larger cultural syntheses: "Put briefly, the Romantic Drama is the marriage of Drama and Story; it is produced by the amalgamation on the popular stage of the Ancient Classical Drama with the stories of Mediæval Romance" (*ACD*: 427). A similar use of summarizing perspectives will coordinate the discussion of world literature.

Moulton embarks on an even more challenging task when he decides to analyze literary form in the Bible. He envisages a morphological inquiry into the "foundation forms of literature, such as Epic, Lyric, Dramatic … " (*The Literary Study of the Bible*: v; hereafter *LS*), for "every variety of literary interest is represented in the books of the Old and New Testaments" (*BL*: 7). Moulton consistently champions literal readings of the text as an antidote to the obscurities of scholarly and theological commentary, but he admits that, in the case of the Bible, it is difficult to know what that text actually looks like. The format of chapter and verse, familiar from the King James and Revised versions of the Bible, does not suggest the existence of genres – nor is it an accurate reproduction of the original text. In reproducing the Bible as narrative, poetry, drama or essay, Moulton has supplied relevant generic formats to clarify an initial undivided series of letters. "The Bible," Moulton expostulates, "has come down to us as the worst-printed book in the world. … if we open our ordinary version we find that the literary form is that of a scrap book: a succession of numbered sentences, with divisions into longer or shorter chapters, under which all trace of dramatic, lyric, story, essay, is hopelessly lost" (*A Short Introduction to the Literature of the Bible*: 9; hereafter *SI*). As a reader and teacher, he is determined to make the best and most complete sense of any text, and he starts by identifying its genre. The *Book of Ruth* is mainly narrative; the *Song of Songs* is a lyric idyl containing dramatized reminiscences; the exchange between Christ and Pontius Pilate is a dramatic dialogue; the *Book of Job* has an epic story as its basis (*BL*, 7). The next level of analysis correlates details: here, a reader who does not recognize *Job*'s internal dramatic structure risks the error of taking as God's words the statements of an early speaker who is repudiated in the last chapter (*SI*: 6–7).

An essay titled "How to Read the Bible," published as an appendix to *The Bible at a Single View* (hereafter *BV*), condenses earlier arguments and emphasizes the role of the reader, who is directed to read quickly and fluently so as to keep all parts in mind. To this end, footnotes and cross-references will be eliminated, for "*Annotation is interruption*" (*BV*: 101). Given uncluttered pages and a good translation, the reader should finish "A Book at a Sitting" in order to grasp its sense a whole: an approach that Moulton calls "the Interpretation of Perspective" (*BV*: 102) as opposed to that

of Exegesis, the interpretation of details. Unity of perspective is a crucial part of Moulton's model: obtained by the correlation of properly observed details, it is more than the sum of its parts, a higher understanding that comes into view only through the lens of the reader's attention.

Earlier works introduced strategies for observing and correlating details. When attention shifts to the reader's role – to the active *perception* of unity – it moves into an area that has major importance for Moulton's concept of world literature. Readers have a limited field of vision, and each viewer acts as "a lens focussing the multiplex particulars of the whole in its own individual arrangement" (*W*: 7). From the whole that is universal literature, there will be many individual arrangements: "World Literature will be a different thing to the Englishman and to the Japanese: the Shakespeare who bulks so large to the Englishman will be a small detail to the Japanese" (*W*: 7). Already interested in broad literary-historical perspectives, Moulton announces in the introduction to *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture* that "the standpoint of this work is literary culture, as distinguished from literary science" (*W*: 55).

Culture, it turns out, must be studied very much like literature. "The civilization and culture in which we make a part can be studied only by a process similar in kind to that which in the present work has been applied to literature. We must take our stand at the point where we find ourselves, and, looking from that point in all directions, we must bring perspective into play: we must distinguish what from our viewpoint is great and what small, what is essential and what less essential" (*W*: 435). Yet *culture* is a vague term with broad applications, especially in the Victorian period. In *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture*, Moulton refers to "our modern English culture" (297) which was once "the culture of Europe" (434), to "Hellenic culture" (13), "Modern Culture" (49), the "culture of other peoples" (51), culture as opposed to mere history (434), and the general culture (v) which should not be restricted to a "cultural period" in life (461) but, to be "wholesome," must be diffused to the public at large (455), preferably through universities which have a "function of cultural teaching" (454) but have recently specialized in research. Moulton's own "cultural studies" (296) seek out the connections between large cultural units that are represented, in this book, by literary works and groups of works. The "intrinsic criticism" of literary analysis has been redeployed: it is occupied "not with individual literary productions, but with literary types and their interrelations" (M: 490). Within this larger framework, readers will be shown the techniques of "comparative reading" (*W*: 351–81) and of recognizing "strategic points in literature" (*W*: 407–28).

Whether the subject matter be individual works or "historic connections," Moulton argues for an investigative process that is based on evidence and creates new avenues of approach. In previous books, he attacked philological and historical criticism in the name of inductive science; in *The Modern Study of Literature*, he describes a similar opposition between "static" and "evolutionary" criticism, "outer" and "inner" principles. These are "two mental attitudes … The static thinker is possessed by fixed ideas, or fixed standards" taken for universal (M: 7), and the evolutionary thinker, biased "toward the idea of process," looks "to the interrogation of history for the developing principles by which its successive stages are

interpreted" (*M*: 8) Moulton's "English literary pedigree" illustrates such a development, first combining elements from ancient Hellenic and Hebrew civilizations (*W*: 10), later merging with European Medievalism and Romance (*W*: 26), and culminating in a Modern Culture with "New Thought, a New Poetry, a New Religion, and a New Art" (*W*: 49). In its gradual definition of English culture, this development distinguishes between civilizations that have influenced its character ("collateral" propinquity) and those who have not ("extraneous" literatures) (*W*: 13).

The cultural evidence to build this pedigree is presented in a sequence of "Five Literary Bibles," surveyed as foundation documents for English world literature. Moulton explains the term "literary bible" (adapted from Denton Snider's "World Bibles" of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe) as implying "a wide range of literature with high significance of matter and some sense of literary unity; it further suggests a process of selection already accomplished by evolution, a survival of the spiritually fittest" (*W*: 53–54). A single literary bible may contain only one work (I: "The Holy Bible") or author (III: "Shakespeare"), or a group set in a particular historical or comparative perspective: II: "Classical Epic and Tragedy," IV: "Dante and Milton: The Epics of Medieval Catholicism and Renaissance Protestantism," and V: "Versions of the Story of Faust" (*W*: vii). Shifting from "objective" to "subjective" literature (and decrying the tendency to put the author before the literary text) Moulton devotes an additional chapter to the evolution of literary modes of "personal revelation" from Ecclesiasticus to Francis Bacon (VIII: "Literary Organs of Personality: Essays and Lyrics," *W*: 383). Discussion of works in the literary bibles is accompanied by chapters urging comparative methods that reveal evolutionary structures: Chapter VII, "Comparative Reading," advises "mental grouping … that instinctively draws together similarities and contrasts from different parts of the literary field," and Chapter IX, "Strategic Points in Literature," recommends the search for broadly significant works (Plato; Rabelais) or convergences (Erasmus and Francis Bacon; Molière, Shakespeare, and Victor Hugo) that "bear on the survey of the field of literature as a whole." Moulton recognizes the arbitrariness of these choices ("an individual selection") but is not deterred: most important throughout is the "tendency to search for what is strategic" (*W*: 408).

It is an interesting situation. Moulton has already defined world literature as an angle of perspective on the whole of literature (in this case, an English perspective), so the fact that he uses his own English perspective to select the evidence only reinforces the representative nature of his results. In addition, the selection is not immediately self-evident (as were, for example, Shakespeare's plays for *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*). Moulton assumes general agreement among his readers about the material he presents, and consequently explores its thematic and formal interrelationships rather than probing the cultural identity of any one part. Yet there is more to say about this "English" version of world literature, especially about the cultural overtones of Moulton's casual pronouncements. (He would not disagree in principle, having noted elsewhere that there are "habits of thought which, at particular times, are found to prevail," *M*: 5).

Accompanying the formal literary analyses is a series of easy generalizations that reflect Victorian cultural stereotypes and assumptions about global civilization. After positing that the "leading races of the world may conveniently be divided into

three classes" (that is, Semitic and Aryan peoples plus a third class that is "merely a total of the races other than Semitic and Aryan"), Moulton hedges in a footnote that he does not "imply, necessarily, that it was the racial factor, and not (*e.g.*) historical circumstances, that brought about the distinguishing influence of each civilization" (*W*: 11). Nonetheless, Hellenic and Hebraic civilizations are seen to dominate the first two races, while non-Hellenic Aryan civilizations fall behind as they "become distinguished by fecundity rather than progressive power" (13). In a startling juxtaposition of Judaism and Islam, he offers as historical fact that "the Arabs, inspired by the powerful individuality of Mahomet, had produced a new religion, a perverted Hebraism" (32). Patriotism has its role in literary criticism too: Moulton calls William Morris "our English Homer" (111) and Swinburne, he claims, "produces drama in Greek form which reads as purely Greek in their matter and thought as if they were plays of Aeschylus or Sophocles" (429–30). Moulton introduces the *Arabian Nights* (a "collateral" work) as an "intellectual holiday tour to be separated from our own responsible life" (304) before proceeding to an impressive exposition of its involuted story form; when contrasting different types of imagery in modern English and in the Hebrew (or "oriental") *Song of Songs*, he also remarks that "the poet of the Idyls belongs to a more warmly amorous race than his English readers" (*Biblical Idyls*: xix). Technical analyses of literary texts, myriad cross-references to diverse literary traditions, and odd cultural generalizations combine in *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture* to produce a layered – and recognizably Victorian – image of the English literary pedigree.

Moulton does not believe that *particularities* of language play an important role in the transmission of world literature, citing Emerson that "What is really best in any book is translatable; any real insight or broad human sentiment" (*W*: 5). It is a familiar idea in an era when most translated works did not even list the name of the translator unless the translation were a creative work in itself (like Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*). Philology governed the current study of language, and the exploration of structural linguistics had scarcely begun; French *explication de texte* depended largely on history and philology. Consequently, Moulton devises his own methodology in "Language as a Factor in Literary Art" (*M*: 456–86), where he distinguishes between an outer and an inner study of literature and relegates language to the limbo of barren facts. "Language belongs to the outer literary study: we are concerned here with literary art" (*M*: 457).

Language and history are linked, in this view, as disciplines that have both a limited, factual and positivist side and a dynamic, vitalizing, artistic one. In current humanity studies, each concentrates on "surface variations" and ignores the "common civilization" that should be their joint aim (*W*: 431–32). Yet for each there is a more productive alternative. When history proceeds by philosophical analysis, it leads to the "understanding of civilization and culture"; when language exploits the metaphorical vitality of words, it is transformed into literary art. Finally, when the two are combined in the study of world literature, the "comparative habit of mind … acts as a lens" bringing into focus the complex interrelationships of civilization itself. Together, they give rise to Moulton's assertion that "world literature is civilization presented by itself" – that it is the "Autobiography of Civilization" (*W*: 437).

Moulton's theory of world literature is a peculiar blend of innovative critical insights and generalized pronouncements about cultural and spiritual values. Dedicated to teaching and passionate about literature, he preaches educational reform because traditional study has failed "to give the average man or woman any heart knowledge of these literatures" (M: 457). Many of his views reflect conventional Victorian beliefs: faith in the progress of civilization (and its English pinnacle); Orientalist perspectives; admiration for science; faith in universal truths (including universal human nature and literature as "a higher interpretation of life and nature"; M: 509); reliance on masterworks whose universality precludes linguistic obstacles to translation. His pursuit of scientific method includes both the logic of inductive criticism and a static organization of subject-matter exemplified in charts, tables, and diagrams of cultural relationships.

Yet there is much to admire, including the energy with which he argues his cause. He has a surprising array of critical strategies that foreshadow later, form-based theories of criticism. Benefiting from the contemporary fascination with science and the "wildly fashionable" comparative method (Mandler 2000: 233), he recommends close reading and inductive patterns of inquiry. In the name of literary analysis, he rejects both biographical interpretation and a philological focus on details of editions and texts (such as a change in wording or a reference to historical circumstances) (*W*: 381). A work, he says, has its own intentionality, unique to its literary structures and separate from the author's presumed intention: "in science, the 'purpose' of a thing is the purpose it actually serves, and is discoverable only by analysis" (*S*: 26). He remarks on the influence of a reader's expectations when first viewing a text: whether it will be approached as a novel, a lyric, or a meaningless block of letters that must be decoded depends on the reader's preliminary assumptions about form. He even identifies various "fallacies" of interpretation. Finally, although he does tend to see the role of the reader in generalized terms ("an Englishman, a Japanese," *W*: 7), and theorizes on the basis of a collective "universal literature" and "whole literary field," Moulton specifically champions a "perspective attitude" in reading and a "perspective view of the whole" (M: 390). His world literature is available only in an angle of perspective, and that angle depends on the cultural positioning of the viewer. Though Moulton interprets that position as a "national standpoint," it could easily become a more particularized analysis of the viewer's cultural identity, field of vision, and role in the production of world literature.

Moulton's significance for world literature studies consists chiefly in his concept of a determining angle of vision, but also in the way he works out these ideas over a lifetime of teaching and prolific publication. ("My life has been entirely occupied with the study and the teaching of literature. I have sought in the present work to embody the main results of my experience … ," *W*: v). *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture* does not emerge from a vacuum; Moulton tests "the principles of scientific criticism" in *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, the comparative method and "literary evolution" in *The Ancient Classical Drama*, and the application of literary analysis to complex cultural texts in his studies of the Bible. The areas in which he is less persuasive are many and visible: the cultural stereotypes, the disinterest in problems of translation, the arguments anchored in idealized images of life and art, and the static cultural diagrams. His important insight into the perspectival identity of

world literature is realized in a sample version – the "English literary pedigree" – that exposes the vulnerability of such principles of inclusion and exclusion. The same issues, however, remain to perplex later thinkers. Philo Buck's struggles over which international texts to include in his pioneering world literature courses at the University of Wisconsin came down to identical questions of "collateral" or "extraneous" relationship – and were decided upon that basis. Current efforts to achieve a more balanced picture strive to find flexible strategies for representing diverse viewpoints. In both theory and practice, Richard Moulton demonstrates the difficulties of talking about global literature from a limited point of view and within a cultural situation whose influence is not always recognized. As such, he is a salutary example and an exemplary resource.

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# 5
# RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S COMPARATIVE WORLD LITERATURE

*Bhavya Tiwari*

When asked to deliver a lecture on comparative literature to the Indian National Council of Education in February 1907 in Calcutta, Tagore opted to name his lecture "Vishwa Sahitya," or "World Literature." His decision continues to resonate within Indian comparative literature today. On its website, the Comparative Literature Association of India states the following among its objectives:

> To promote the ideal of one world by appreciation of Comparative Literature beyond national frontiers, and in pursuance thereof to rise above separate identities of single national literatures so that the all embracing concept of Viswa-Sahitya as visualized by Tagore or Goethe's Weltliteratur may be realized as a measure of international understanding.
>
> (http://www.clai.in/index.html)

It is no surprise that Tagore becomes the figurative ambassador of the association in promoting the philosophy of comparative literature in India. Indeed, it would be impossible to replace Tagore with any other figure that could enthrall readers and thinkers at home and abroad alike. Moreover, for comparative literature scholars in India, Tagore's position is nothing short of that of founder of the discipline. As Sisir Kumar Das notes in the introduction to his *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Writings on Literature and Language* (2001), Tagore was the first in India to deliver a lecture on the ethos of the discipline, which was still in its infancy in the West, and almost unheard of in India.

Tagore's special position in Indian literature can be compared only with that of Goethe, whose *Weltliteratur* is equated with Tagore's vision of Vishwa Sahitya in the association's constitution. Certainly, for a writer like Rabindranath Tagore, whose career as a creative writer has eclipsed his literary criticism, social discourses, and interdisciplinary engagements, it is significant that his Vishwa Sahitya became the goal of the Comparative Literature Association of India, especially when Goethe's

*Weltliteratur* remains absent from the statutes both of the International Comparative Literature Association and of the American Comparative Literature Association.

Born in 1861 under English rule, Tagore went to England in 1878, only to return, degreeless, in 1888. Though he had no formal training in the English language, he learned it at home and employed it effectively in social gatherings and in his travels. It would not be incorrect to point out that the historical predicament forced Tagore into learning English. Unlike such writers as Michael Madhusudhan Datta, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, and Toru Dutt, who began their literary careers in English, only to later change to Bengali, Tagore had no such desire. In fact, in his foreword to a collection of poems written in English by Toru Dutt and others, Tagore "described these poems as illustrations of imitative efforts of the Bengalis passionately responding to western literature, and asserted that 'our literature' (i.e. Bengali literature) has finally discovered its 'natural channel in the mother-tongue'" (Das 1994: 16–17).

For an admirer of Sanskrit literature and a translator of the medieval Hindi poet Kabir, it is significant that Tagore uses the phrase "our literature" to refer to the multilingual country beyond Bengal. In a lecture entitled "Bengali National Literature" delivered in 1895 at the annual meeting of the Bengal Academy of Literature, Tagore had made an "eloquent plea for the creation of a 'national' literature reflecting the aspirations of the entire Bengali community" (Tagore 2001: 382). This, however, is not to suggest that Tagore was parochial. It only points toward his anxiety about the hegemony of the English language – still a valid issue today, not only in India but also in other countries that have been forced to adopt English in one or another form.

Bengali remained Tagore's primary language of creative expression for a considerable time. Even when the Swedish Academy awarded him the Nobel Prize for "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill," he made "his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West" (http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1913), Tagore was exceedingly modest concerning his English-language skills. It was only later in his career that he became a bilingual writer. This double identity is evident even in his name. In Bengal he was (and still continues to be) known as Robi Thakur, while to the rest of the world he was and is, Rabindranath Tagore. It is curious to note that "Thakur" itself is not a last name but, rather, a respectful address to Brahmins, which became distorted as "Tagore" in English. Tagore's career as a writer in English was quite unexpected, and began in 1912 when he was moved (by irritation with a translation he didn't like) to translate his major poem cycle *Gitanjali* into English. It would be fair to say that before the English *Gitanjali* Tagore was no doubt a celebrity in Bengal, but a little-known figure in India at large.

With the Nobel Prize in 1913, Tagore was surprised to find himself instantly transformed into a national as well as international star. In a letter to William Rothenstein, a friend and important ally, Tagore expressed his disgust at the sudden attention he received after winning the Nobel Prize: "Really these people honour the honour in me and not myself" (Tagore 1997: 131). Indeed, one can feel the poet's regret at becoming an unexpected national personality, and his deep sensitivity towards the hostility he received in the English press for winning the prize over

Thomas Hardy, who was the favorite. In the same letter, Tagore says that "It is almost as bad as tying a tin can to a dog's tail making it impossible for him to move without creating noise and collecting crowds all along. … The only thing that compensates for this is the unfeigned joy and pride that the boys of my school feel at this occasion" (131.). Clearly, the national and the international fame that the Nobel Prize entailed generated a mixed response in Tagore – a distinctly different reaction than the pride that Goethe felt in the honorable role reserved for Germans in the new world of *Weltliteratur* (see Pizer in this volume).

Tagore, however, was always a little wary of nationalist discourses even before he won the Nobel Prize, which only furthered his suspicions. In "Nationalism in India," an essay written in the United States in 1916, Tagore vehemently dismissed nationalist discourses in India, and discounted national boundaries as "imaginary lines of traditions divested of the qualities of real obstacles" (Tagore 1917: 122). In the same essay he goes on to connect nationalism with scholarly production:

> If you compare England with Germany and France you will find that she has produced the smallest numbers of scholars who have studied Indian literature and philosophy with any amount of sympathetic insight or thoroughness. This attitude of apathy and contempt is natural where the relationship is abnormal and founded upon national selfishness and pride.
>
> (Tagore 1917: 126)

For a man who declared that "I survive only in the survival of others" (Tagore 2001: 258), the functions of scholarship, art, and culture are not confined to the "imaginary" boundaries imposed on the globe. Perhaps this is the reason why he preferred to speak of Vishwa Sahitya or World Literature, when called upon to speak about comparative literature at the inauguration of the National Council of Education. In a linguistically diverse country such as India, the local and the global, the national and the international are deeply intertwined. In this respect Tagore's Vishwa Sahitya captures his sense of the very essence of literature, of literary criticism, and his ultimate philosophy.

Let us take a quick glance at the essay "World Literature" and the history of comparative/world literature in India. It is often said that Goethe coined (or at any rate emphasized) the term "world literature" in 1827 following the collapse of Napoleon's imperial ambitions in Europe, in order to project the role of literature as an instrument for peace and cross-connections between nations. In India, the credit for proposing "world literature" has been given to Tagore, who under the nomenclature of "vishwa sahitya" advocated universality, and interactions between literatures across and within nations. The National Council of Education aimed to destabilize the intention of the Governor General of British India to divorce wealthy Indians from their native traditions through English education. In his speech to the Council, Tagore launched the idea of comparative literature as world literature:

> I have been called upon to discuss a subject to which you have given the English name of Comparative Literature. Let me call it World-Literature in Bengali.

> If we want to understand man as revealed in action, his motivations and his aims, then we must pursue his intentions through the whole of history. To take isolated instances, such as the reign of Akbar or Queen Elizabeth, is merely to satisfy curiosity. He who knows that Akbar and Elizabeth are only pretexts or occasions; that man, throughout the whole of history, is incessantly at work to fulfill his deepest purposes, and to unite himself with the All, it is he, I say, who will strive to see in history not the local and the individual, but the eternal and universal man … Likewise, what really claims our attention in World-Literature is the way in which the soul of man expresses its joy.
>
> (Bose 1959: 3)

Comparative literature would translate as "Tulnatamak Sahitya" in Bengali, but Tagore opts instead for "Vishwa Sahitya." Why does Tagore reject the nomenclature "Comparative Literature"? Is "Tulnatamak Sahitya" or "Comparative Literature" too narrow for the vast Indian subcontinent? In the lines just quoted, Tagore begins by emphasizing a supranational universality (for more on this point, see Dharwadker in this volume). Yet he then proceeds to give a much more particular account, grounded in the land:

> What I am trying to say amounts to this. Just as this earth is not the sum of patches of land belonging to different people, and to know the earth as such is sheer rusticity, so literature is not the mere total of works composed by different hands. Most of us, however, think of literature in what I have called the manner of the rustic. From this narrow provincialism we must free ourselves; we must strive to see the work of each author as a whole, that whole as a part of man's universal creativity, and that universal spirit in its manifestations through World-Literature. Now is the time to do so.
>
> (Bose 1959: 4)

Here, Tagore has significantly modulated the universalism of his approach, as he is not using neutral metaphors when speaking of the earth not being the "sum of patches of land belonging to different people" and of literature as not being "the mere total of works composed by different hands."

To understand the implications of these metaphors, we should recall that the birth of the National Council of Education took place at a tumultuous time when the British administration had divided the state of Bengal into East and West Bengal, on the pretext of the region's unmanageability. The real motive of the British, however, was to separate Hindus and Muslims in two different geographical regions, with the Muslim population predominating in the eastern part of Bengal. Tagore is countering this policy by using the ecological metaphors of earth and land, emphasizing the organic connectedness that exists beyond geographical – or religious or linguistic – boundaries when it comes to literatures and other art forms. Furthermore, by saying that "literature is not the mere total of works composed by different hands," Tagore is underscoring the mobility and dynamic nature of "Vishwa Sahitya." He says that "we must strive to see the work of each author as a whole, that whole as a part of

man's universal creativity, and that universal spirit in its manifestations through World-Literature," and in this way he is accentuating the unique adaptability of "Vishwa Sahitya" to attune itself to the rhythms of its newly found home ground across and within nations and languages.

Tagore's conscious choice of "Vishwa" or "World" over "Tulnatamak" or "Comparative" literature presents an interesting stance on the future of comparative/world literature departments in the Indian subcontinent; and beyond that, his second term, "Sahitya," takes us into a still different realm and era. The word "sahitya" has its etymological roots in Sanskrit, and does not have the same resonance as the word "literature" in English. Unlike "literature," which loosely means anything written and printed, "sahitya" simply means "togetherness" and harmonious "coexistence." In Bharata's drama treatise *Natyashastra*, one of the oldest theoretical works in Sanskrit reflecting on the nature and concept of art, the author emphasizes that art, unlike the four Vedas, is democratic and social in purpose; art integrates within itself music, dance, poetry, composition, and acting so as to appeal to everyone while instructing through pleasure. Thus, if we come back to Tagore's idea of "World Literature," both words, "Vishwa" and "Sahitya," highlight connections that transcend geographical and artistic boundaries. In fact, Tagore's own engagements went beyond the printed page – he was not only an exceptional writer but also a painter, a botanist, an educator, a musician, and a dance dramatist.

What then is World Literature or Vishwa Sahitya? In *What is World Literature?* (2003), David Damrosch has given a threefold definition of world literature: as an elliptical refraction of national literatures; as literature that gains in translation; and as a mode of reading beyond our own place and time. But would such a definition work on Indian soil? If we think of world literature as a group of "elliptical refractions of national literature," what literature/literatures from India would enter the traditions of world literature, since India really doesn't have a national literature as such? Will the works composed by Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, and Arundhati Roy make it to the blockbuster postcolonial list? Or will Kabir's works triumph over Tukaram of Maharashtra, and displace medieval female mystic poets such as Mira of Rajasthan and Andal of Tamil Nadu? And conversely, if world literature gains in translation, what texts have a proclivity to enter the world literature canon of India? Will García Márquez, Kafka, and Gabriela Mistral be read in English, Bengali, and Hindi? Or are we going to have Tolstoy and Baudelaire being translated into Dravidian languages? But then, how are we to define translation in the Indian context, where performativity extends far beyond the written word, and the very term "translation" when translated into Sanskrit/Bengali/Hindi is "*anuvad*" or "speaking after." Finally, if world literature involves going beyond one's own place and time, a reading of Galib's *ghazals* by a non-native speaker of Hindi and Urdu in India will "other" such a reader within Ghalib's own country.

Many world literary traditions are in fact at work in India, and as a result there cannot be one comparative literature or even one world literature, either within India or circulating from India out to the world. As a case in point, let us look at the journey of Tagore's *Gitanjali* both in world literatures and in Indian literatures. Tagore himself translated *Gitanjali* from Bengali into English in 1912. The Bengali *Gitanjali* has 157 poems, whereas his English version has only 103. Had the

translation entailed only the exclusion of 54 Bengali poems, our task would have been easier. But the fact that the English *Gitanjali* is really not the Bengali *Gitanjali* has raised issues regarding authorship, readership, and translation methodologies in the canons of world literature. While translating *Gitanjali*, Tagore took extreme liberties in paraphrasing or adapting his lines, and he often combined two or more poems to create a new one in English. The result was that the same author thereby produced two *Gitanjali*s.

Moreover, even before Tagore tried his hand at translating his poem into English, Roby Dutta had translated eight of the songs for an anthology entitled *Echoes from East and West*, published in 1909. Roby Dutta was "a student of Cambridge (and later a well known teacher of English Literature at Calcutta University)," and a skilled translator who evidently anticipated a favorable reaction from Tagore (Mukherjee 2004: 115). But when he presented the poet with a copy of his translations, Tagore was not pleased. Later, Tagore wrote to his friend Pamathalal Sen that "I don't think my poems can be rendered properly into English … certainly not in rhymed verse. Maybe it can be done in plain prose. When I go to England I shall try my hand at it" (Mukherjee 2004: 115). And he did try his hand, rendering and introducing himself to the English world, and consequently getting translated into several other European languages before he became famous in India. Tagore thus became an Indian poet and a Bengali poet in part by making himself first into a world poet.

But was Tagore really happy with his translations of *Gitanjali*? In 1935, Tagore wrote a letter to Edward Thompson about his translations, lamenting that "I have done gross injustice to my original productions partly owing to my incompetence, partly to carelessness" (Mukherjee 2004: 120). Indeed, one who has first known Tagore in Bengali and then in English would sympathize with the world poet's comment. Yet one wonders if the "gross injustice" that Tagore himself talks about nonetheless helped to make him a world poet, perhaps illustrating his own concept of "Vishwa Sahitya." Before Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize, his poetry was little known in Indian languages, though his prose had been translated into English and Indian languages. By 1914 his short stories had been taught in Indian colleges and schools, but his poetry was less widely known. Yet after Tagore won the Nobel Prize, numbers of translations were made into Indian languages from his English *Gitanjali* – not from the Bengali original (Mukherjee 2004: 118). Even so, Tagore's entry into Indian languages was slower than his popularity in European languages. Within a few years after Tagore translated his *Gitanjali* into English, he was translated into German, Spanish, French, and Danish. In fact, during the years 1914–24, there were more translations of *Gitanjali* in German than in Hindi, more in Spanish than in Nepali, more in French than in Kannada.

One would have expected *Gitanjali* to be translated into Hindi and Assamese before Telugu, which is geographically farthest from Bengal. Yet the first lyric translation of *Gitanjali* into Hindi appeared only in 1924, eleven years after the first Telugu translation. On the other hand, the decade since 2000 has seen more translations of *Gitanjali* into Hindi than into any other Indian language. Of all the translations of *Gitanjali* into Indian languages, Hindi, whose start was weak in the beginning, now has the most *Gitanjali*s.

Even with this boom in Hindi translation, the number of translations of *Gitanjali* into Spanish surpasses those into Hindi. In an article called "The Invention of an Andalusian Tagore," Howard Young brings a new perspective to Tagore's reception in Europe and Latin America:

> Rabindranath Tagore's fortunes in the Spanish-speaking world defy simple summarization … Tagore's books have sold better than many Spanish-language poets. During World War II, long after Tagore's idolatry faded in Europe, Latin Americans, including members of the working classes in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, continued to read *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener*, and in Spain today poets still compete for the Rabindranath Tagore prize for poetry.
>
> (Young 1995: 42)

Clearly, if world literature gains through translation, we need to achieve a multiple and varied sense of these gains: Tagore has been read and received differently in translation in his own country and elsewhere.

Without a doubt, there has to be a different kind of comparative or world literature at work in the Indian context – one which goes beyond the European-style "Comparative Literature" that Tagore rejected. One direction for such work was proposed in the 1980s by the prominent Bengali comparatist Amiya Dev, who argued for the development of a "Comparative Indian Literature." As he observed, India's twenty-two literary languages form a comparative landscape comparable to that of Europe, but a landscape of closely interwoven languages, not separated by national borders, and always interacting together. As a result, he said, "Bengali will be Bengali +, Panjabi Panjabi +, and Tamil Tamil +. In a multilingual situation there cannot be a true appreciation of a single literature in absolute isolation" (Dev 1984: 14). Gurbhagat Singh, however, has cautioned that Dev's position might result in sacrificing the differential multilogue for a homogenized Indian literature and identity (Singh 1991: 11). A purely internal comparison of Indian literatures would be too little attentive to the active presence of international trends within India and to the impact of Indian writers abroad – including the impact within India itself of their foreign activity, as is so notable in the case of Tagore.

But for these kinds of disciplinary debates and comparisons or analyses of inter-literary processes to happen between Indian literatures, many comparative literature departments are needed. Unfortunately there are still only a handful of comparative literature departments in India – less than the total number of India's official languages. Half a century ago Buddhadev Bose, the founder at Jadavpur University of the first (and for a long time the only) fully fledged comparative literature department in India, said that:

> Potentially, India is one of the richest fields for Comparative Literature. The age and complexity of our civilization, the diverse elements that compose it, that "world-hunger" of which Tagore spoke a hundred times and which took possession of us with the dawning of our modern age – all these provide the material and atmosphere demanded by the nature of this discipline.

> The history of India is a story of absorption, adaptation and assimilation, of continual coming to terms with foreign influences, and of resistance transformed into response. We have great links with many cultures of the East and West; our religions have influenced Western thought; interest in our arts and literatures is now keen and widespread. If Comparative Literature is permitted to develop, it can be of service in bringing India and the world spiritually closer and it can make a small contribution to the growth of that cosmopolitan spirit which is much more discussed than achieved.
>
> (Bose 1959: 10)

Perhaps a blending of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* and Tagore's "Vishwa Sahitya" could be an answer to India's linguistic diversity, since India is a world within itself, where local and global converge and diverge, a place that has had cultural and literary connections not only with the British but also with the Persians, the Portuguese, the French, and East and Southeast Asian countries, a place where linguistic diversity promotes variety in aesthetics, and where traditions collude with each other and at the same time transcend the "imagined" national or state boundaries to connect with the foreign; it is a place where one can be away from home even in one's own country. Perhaps, then, India can provide a model for "Tulnatamak Vishwa Sahitya" – "Comparative World Literature" – as the basis for a genuinely global study of literature today.

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# 6 RICHARD MEYER'S CONCEPT OF WORLD LITERATURE[1]

*Monika Schmitz-Emans*

The Germanist Richard Moritz Meyer (1860–1914) adopted an original yet demanding position in the discourse on the term "world literature." Coming from a family of Jewish bankers, Meyer was financially independent, but often faced discrimination in his profession on account of his Jewish origin. Although he managed to finish a post-doctoral thesis, he never achieved his ambition to be appointed to a professorship in Berlin, and remained an associate professor. Meyer compiled a range of monographs and essays, and was a contributor to the "Allgemeine deutsche Biographie." As a literary historian, he dealt with a variety of subjects, thus demonstrating the range of his non-literary interests. Besides older German literature, Goethe scholarship was a special interest of Meyer, who had been a member of the Goethe Society since 1887. He published a huge biography of Goethe in 1895, and it was reprinted four times by 1913. Another monograph was dedicated to Friedrich Nietzsche (1913). As Meyer himself said, his studies on Goethe had a considerable influence on his conception of "world literature," but his Nietzsche studies certainly were relevant too.

Meyer not only used the term "world literature" in the context of his work on literary history. He wanted to define the term, and he knew that this called for debate with the positions of other literary theorists and historians. In 1900, he published a long treatise whose title already hinted at his conception of the term "world literature": "Die Weltliteratur und die Gegenwart" ("World Literature and the Present"). Another book whose title includes the term, and which also refers to the present, was published in 1913: *Die Weltliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert* (*World Literature in the 20th Century*).

## Meyer's definition of the term "world literature"

Meyer's 1900 essay highlights the main features of his conception of "world literature." He is not a dry theoretician, but writes in an accomplished rhetorical style,

and defines and explains the concept of world literature using a range of metaphors, in particular, vitalistic imagery (like the "hibernation" and new awakening of texts of world literature). Landscape metaphors have a suggestive effect and are used to describe the historical dimension of world literature, which appears as a "powerfully flowing stream"[2] that flows partly underground through history. It "ceases" at times, narrows, flows beneath the earth only to "erupt with renewed power" (Meyer 1900: 272).[3] Further complex associations are related to metaphors of music, or rather, musical instruments. World literature is compared to an organ that is played by humanity's "genius" (Meyer 1900: 272). The harmony of the spheres is not far removed from the organ, and Meyer also uses this traditional cosmological image to characterize world literature; its timeless character is contrasted with the temporal elements: "This is the actual harmony of the spheres: with wonderful homophony, the sounds of poetry and music accompany a people's development, its destiny, its flowering and its death" (Meyer 1900: 272).[4]

### *"Weltliteratur" as a key concept: Goethe's influence*

The starting point for Meyer's examination of the term "world literature" is Goethe's use of language, which (like Goethe's work as a whole) is, in Meyer's view, an epochal point in the history of the conception of literature; "Weltliteratur" thus becomes the core and key concept of poetics. According to Meyer, Goethe had been particularly influenced in his employment of the concept of world literature by reading foreign magazines (*Edinburgh Review*, 1829) (cf. Meyer 1900: 169).

By way of introduction, he quotes important passages, such as parts of Goethe's review of Alexandre Duval's Tasso play, in which Goethe speaks of his conviction that "a universal world literature is about to emerge, with us Germans taking a major role,"[5] and makes a general reflection on the "progress of mankind,"[6] with the "further prospects of the world and humanity"[7] (Goethe) as a background. Meyer's comment on this emphasizes the future-oriented character of Goethe's conception of world literature, the idea that the age of world literature had just dawned, that "world literature," at core, is the literature of the future. In Meyer's paraphrase: "To Goethe, it is something which is anticipated with hope, yet at times with concern – a future development" (Meyer 1900: 279).[8] Indeed, Goethe's letter to Streckfuß dated 27 January 1827, which is commonly seen as the most important early documentation of the term "Weltliteratur," unmistakably speaks of a future agenda: "I am convinced that a world literature is about to emerge and that all nations will take the actions necessary."[9] Meyer also regards the poetics of early romanticism as the articulation of such an essentially future-oriented ideal of literature: according to Meyer, the romanticists had made Goethe's views their own and used them for their poetics of progression, even before the actual coining of the term (Meyer was not aware of Wieland's use of the term "Weltliteratur") (cf. Meyer 1900: 270). Schlegel's formula of a "progressive universal poetics,"[10] in particular, is, according to Meyer, an anticipation of Goethe's idea of a world literature: besides being a movement towards the future, both approaches are connected by the idea of a cultural crossing of borders, a synthesizing, transnational collection of all works.

### *"Weltliteratur" as a transepochally applicable term: modifications of Goethe's concept*

However, Meyer differs in some significant respects from his reconstruction of Goethe's concept of world literature, since his purpose is to recognize not only future literature but also older literary documents as world literature. World literature – as Meyer views it – has always existed; its history starts with literature as such, and early literature is in no way inferior to contemporary literature as regards its place in world literature: "We believe in a world literature, but neither is it a subject of the future nor is it about to develop – it is as old as literature itself and at this time it is not more strongly developed than in earlier times" (Meyer 1900: 270).[11]

Despite its merits, Goethe's concept, in Meyer's view, is dedicated to an idea of progress that implicitly devalues older literature as opposed to newer literature. In opposition to it, Meyer emphatically insists on the equal aesthetic status of older poetic works: "We are also convinced of an inherent sameness of all literature at all times, and would thus never prefer a new epoch of world literature to older epochs of national literature" (Meyer 1900: 270).[12] Meyer further argues that the conception of a forthcoming new era of world literature contradicts Goethe's own disposition to value the continuities rather than the caesuras, his "dogma of continuity and slowly continuing evolution."[13] This, according to Meyer, is actually Goethe's strength: like Darwin, he discovers "smooth transitions and permanent developments everywhere"[14] and accepts "volcanic renewals"[15] neither in mineralogy nor in politics and the arts (Meyer 1900: 270). Accordingly, a perception of world literature that is relevant for works of all eras and that emphasizes the continuous connection between them would be more in the vein of Goethe's thinking than the idea of a caesura emerging in the nineteenth century, which can be found in Goethe's remarks.

That Meyer clearly distances himself from what he perceives to be an implicit belief in progress in Goethe's world literature discourse is neither accidental nor stubborn. From a perspective informed by modernism, which clearly shaped Meyer, the category of progress is no longer acceptable; from the perspective of human history, it might even be considered obsolete. Recipients of Nietzsche in particular must regard a self-evident conception of history as progress as a naïve anachronism. Around 1900, an increasing awareness of the processes of decay and the manifestations of historical decline informed the formation of Decadence philosophy and culture, and many historians and philosophers turned towards cyclical or even regressive models of thinking. However, this is only one reason for Meyer's rejection of the idea of progress, which, according to him, had motivated Goethe to reserve his concept of world literature for an (optimistically anticipated) future literature. Meyer's modification of Goethe's concept was also influenced by late nineteenth-century thought; from this perspective, old documents of language and literature are not inferior (that is, incomplete or preliminary) to the literary "flowering" of contemporary times, but rather, are valuable records of the respective national culture's history. European nations, in particular, regard medieval literary documents as testimony of their national identity, and the commonly held view is that older (often considered "traditional") literary documents, in particular, express a nation's "spirit." The analysis of national philologies leads to a growing awareness

of the cultural and aesthetic status of older texts – and often they serve the purpose of constructing national identities. Meyer is such a philologist, a specialist in, among others, early and medieval German literature.

Whereas Meyer considers Goethe's definition of world literature "too narrow" ("zu eng"), he rejects definitions of the term in contemporary discourse as too broad. World literature should not be viewed as an additive concept, embracing single literatures and works under an umbrella term. Providing an example of a broad and undifferentiated recent use of the term, Meyer names the *Geschichte der Weltliteratur* of the Swiss Jesuit Alexander Baumgartner, published in six volumes between 1886 and 1911, which also includes "cultures without literature" – Baumgartner's expression. In that respect, "Weltliteratur" is a parallel term to "Weltgeschichte" (world history) and signifies "the whole corpus of all important literature" (Meyer 1900: 270).[16] The disadvantage of such a concept of world literature is its unspecific treatment of the texts in question.

### *Aesthetic aspects: "world literature" as an evaluative category*

Besides concepts that are either too narrow (i.e. connected to the idea of progress) or too broad (i.e. undifferentiated), Meyer proposes a possible third definition: the evaluative. He uses this with reference to the connotations of labeling a work as "world literature": it is equivalent to a positive evaluation.[17] This level of meaning had been ignored by Goethe, who, in his optimistic belief in a future literature, disregarded older texts; in Baumgartner's, Scherr's, and other definitions, this aspect did not play a role because they regarded "all literature"[18] as part of a world literature, regardless of its actual aesthetic value. According to Meyer, however, real "world literature" is a literature of such value that it speaks to the whole world, regardless of its date of origin. In this literature, something substantially relevant is articulated – something that has "universal relevance – regardless of its time of origin" (Meyer 1900: 271).[19] To which qualities, however, does this implicit "Werturtheil" refer? To the content, the form, the transhistorical potentials of meaning, or to the complexity of composition?

### *Aspects of anthropology: world literature as an expression of the genuinely human*

At this point, Meyer's examination of the term "world literature" turns towards ethics and anthropology: he assumes a need for expression that connects humans of all ages and cultures, literature being the medium for this will to expression. Poetry, both oral and written, is a form for articulating interests, themes and essential experiences that are relevant across history – experiences that are so fundamental that they are repeated throughout the ages. To Meyer, only those works through which the poet speaks in the name of the whole of mankind attain the status of world literature. Whoever succeeds in putting into words the human condition creates a work of transhistorical relevance – hence, a literature for the "world." The desire to speak for all appears to be an even stronger stimulus to poetic productivity than the representation of specific cultural themes, particular historic experiences, or individual ideas, let alone the interest in a simple play with forms. According to

Meyer, the audience's need for works that address fundamentally human situations is also constant, despite historical change.

For Meyer, humanity itself is an "individual" or, literally, something indivisible. World literature is the manifestation of this indivisibility (and he thus ascribes a quality to it that might be called transhistoric, or even – more critically – ahistoric). To be even more explicit: humanity itself is the "author" of world literature as world literature.

> We regard literature as a unity – as the work of a giant and wonderful individual: man. At all times, he has strived to express the unspeakable, to make the passing moment last, make emotions a common good. In lucky moments, he achieves this miracle again and again.
>
> (Meyer 1900: 271)[20]

### *World literature and national literature*

In Meyer's 1900 essay, world literature and national literature are treated as two contrasting categories. When the poet accomplishes the verbalization only of "temporary sentiments"[21] and "passing impressions,"[22] then his work belongs to "national poetry"[23] and not yet to world literature. The latter only comes into existence through the verbalization of "emotions, impressions, conceptions in which we all participate" (Meyer 1900: 270).[24] Then, the "whole of humanity"[25] expresses "their deepest emotions,"[26] surpassing temporal and time-related moods. As the verbalization of such a universal phenomenon, world literature belongs to all people; it never belongs merely to one epoch, one social group or one nation (cf. Meyer 1900: 271).

### *Aspects of cultural history: world literature as the core of cultural heritage*

Another major conclusion can be derived from Meyer's conception of world literature: since it is a common good, world literature will never vanish. Periods of oblivion or ignorance will always be followed by periods of rediscovery, since the substance of this literature transcends epochs and cultures. In Meyer's view, the reception of Greek literature in the Renaissance and the consideration of Shakespeare in other epochs are proof of this, which he describes with lively comparisons and metaphors. The temporary eclipse of works of world literature is a hibernation[27] from which they will awaken again with a "re-animating energy"[28] and with "indestructible vital force" (Meyer 1900: 271).[29] For Meyer, the history of the reception of Goethe's work is but one example of this.

### *Aspects of poetology: the world literature poet as visionary*

Meyer projects his ideas of the poet and literature onto his conception of world literature; the poet is a seer, medium, and leader of humanity – someone who depicts and interprets its dreams and articulates a collective longing. Meyer connects this

conception of the poet as seer with the self-conceptions of Stefan George, whose relevance he recognized at an early stage. This heroizing of the visionary poet corresponds to the identification of humanity as the originator of world literature, since the poet's visionary ability applies to the whole of humanity and is legitimated by his role of speaker. In other writings, Meyer reinforces the relevance of the concept of the seer (cf. Meyer 1895b: 77–79, 90–92).

### *Establishing a boundary between world literature and scientific literature*

Referring to Georg Brandes' essay "Weltliteratur" (*Literarisches Echo*, 1 October 1899), Meyer rejects the subsuming of "writings of scientists"[30] (Brandes) under the label of "world literature." Expressing his respect for the work of Pasteur, Darwin, and other scientists, Meyer nonetheless perceives the application of the term "world literature" to these works as an abuse of the term – it would mean to "misuse the term world literature" (Meyer 1900: 289).[31] This seems consistent when, according to Meyer's conception, a work's status as world literature is measured aesthetically. At least he concedes the possibility that a "learned work"[32] can gain "permanent literary relevance" (Meyer 1900: 290),[33] which must mean that it can be read as a literary work on account of its style and other aesthetic qualities. Examples of this are the writings of philosophers and moralists.

## Meyer's survey of the history of world literature

Meyer provides a chronological sketch of the history of world literature from ancient times until the present, proving his main idea that the past is never completely gone because the human urge to expression transcends and connects the ages.

### *Looking into pre- and early history*

According to Meyer, the beginnings of world literature can be found in "prehistoric times, when man – half-animal – crawled on the ground, through the woods and fled to the lake dwellings,"[34] because humanity even then felt the same need for expression that yielded the literary and artistic documents of later, high cultures. A kind of proto-poetry had been triggered by the "horror of the eclipsing sun and the joy of its return, the terrifying experience of the chieftain's or the lover's death, the overpowering joy of victory,"[35] which expresses itself in "elementary manner"[36] (Meyer 1900: 272). With this original need for expression as a starting point, all peoples develop an ancient poetry,[37] which Meyer, in his speculative reconstruction, describes using a term borrowed from the Germanist Müllenhoff: "chorische Poesie." According to this concept, literature, music, and dancing form a unity, and there is no difference between poetry, epic, and drama. Poetic articulation is underpinned by shared experiences and sentiments; it is pre-individualistic, often loud and rhythmic, accompanied by instruments. Even this early form of poetry, inspired by a shared event, according to Meyer, is not a completed phase of cultural activity and can thus be revived. This might take place during times of collective activity, which

are still not uncommon, even in the "overcivilized 19th century"[38] – for example, moments of religious elation, or during feasts.

### *The heritage of historical teleology*

The "choric poetry"[39] is, however, a pre-stage of later literature, although it had to develop into a more complex stage[40] (Meyer 1900: 274). From statements such as these it is evident that Meyer himself finds it difficult to abandon ideas of progress, of which he is otherwise critical. Even though the search for poetic pre-stages in early humanity may seem inevitable of his approach to a literary anthropology, his talk of primitive, pre-cultural forms, of "uncultivated clans"[41] or of "dull utterances in the woods"[42] betrays his latent ideas of a historical teleology.

In his depiction of the succeeding stages of the development of poetic productivity, the characteristics of respective countries are combined with a diagnosis of lower and higher stages of cultural development and an implicit model of history which views cultures as representations of different developmental stages of the human mind. In many ways, Meyer conveys imagological clichés as they were propounded by Herder and others.The Egyptians, who talked and wrote too much, never succeeded in producing first-order literary works. Much later, too much pragmatism and efficiency (according to Meyer's ideas) hampered the development of proper poetic capabilities in the Dutch. The Chinese (another cliché) relied too much on rules, and, because of a lack of originality, merely played around a little. Indian culture was too attracted to colorful dreams and was too powerless to make any major contribution to the history of world culture. The only things that come to his mind concerning Arabic literature are that Oriental fairy tales have stimulated European literary fantasy and that Persian poetry has inspired Goethe's *Divan*. Meyer's perspective, in his panoramic view of early literary history, is thus strongly informed by national stereotypes and is at least Eurocentric, if not Germanocentric – and it has difficulty abandoning the idea of cultural progress.

### *The Bible and ancient literature as works of world literature*

There are some literary peaks, however, which have set the highest standards, in Meyer's view. Two corpora of texts are relevant as a true "heritage" of world literature, and whose continuous and intensive reception he emphasizes because their history of reception exemplifies that "relevant" texts never cease to speak to humanity: the Holy Bible and the writings of Greek Antiquity. The Bible – Meyer speaks of "Biblical poetry,"[43] referring to the Old and New Testaments – affects later ages not only on account of its content but also because of its unique use of language – particularly when mediated by important translations such as Luther's. The artistic power of biblical poetry, however, has not been recognized in all ages and cultures; the dull and materialist nineteenth century has only rediscovered it through Nietzsche's thinking. Ancient Greek literature has a similarly far-reaching and epochal effect on the present; it has "directly and indirectly influenced in a hundred ways later literatures of all European nations"[44] (Meyer 1900: 278). That only those peoples can be granted the status of "cultivated nations"[45] that have

drunk from the "spring of classical education"[46] (Meyer 1900: 278) is not uncommon in the dominant perspective of Meyer's time. Meyer at least anticipates the relativism of this view, but at the same time admits that it is hard to free oneself from the archetype of Antiquity. The fact that these texts are mostly read in translated versions does not lessen the actuality of their power and their importance for present culture, since their impact is always mediated through later authors who have been influenced by these texts. Meyer comprehends a respectful awe when dealing with older texts, but their forced reception at school might be counterproductive for a lively relation to the classics.

### *Medieval world literature and its impact*

Whereas Roman literature is rather a decadent version of Greek literature, the Middle Ages see the second flowering of a "true world literature, a universal poetry as the romantics envisioned it"[47] (Meyer 1900: 281). The homogeneity of this "world literature," which incorporates a range of national languages, is constituted not by a shared language but, rather, by a set of common motifs and sentiments. The names and texts that Meyer mentions in his overview of medieval literature conform to a common canon. What is of interest for his conception of world literature as transhistorical and transcultural is that Meyer attributes an important mediating role to contemporary philology. The impact of medieval literature on the present and recent years is particularly relevant both politically and aesthetically. During the days of "cultural struggle,"[48] Walther von der Vogelweide had become a "vital power,"[49] and even the "minor *minnesänger*"[50] are about to be rediscovered. "We might hope that the philologists' work since the days of the Brothers Grimm, Lachmann, and Uhland was not in vain in that respect. The most notable names of Middle High German literature are today again associated with a more lively attitude."[51] (Meyer 1900: 282). Analogously, Wagner's artistic reception of medieval literature proves the persistence of old world literature – even though Meyer holds reservations against this:

> Mediated through Wagner's overly keen translation into modernist-philosophical lyricism, the "Parcival" resonates once again with the deep principal chord which places it among the highest creations of the German mind.[52]
>
> (Meyer 1900: 282)

In his elaborations of world literature, Meyer's medievalist perspective surfaces repeatedly – for example, when he sketches the latest stages of the reception of medieval national epics by scholars and writers alike, mildly criticizing the updating of medieval texts by playwrights like Wagner and Hebbel: in his eyes, they have irritated readers, rather than attracting them, with their updated and divergent interpretations of the literary characters. Thus, the communication of the present and world literature documents of earlier times does not seem to work as well as had been suggested; Meyer explains more complex contexts, which might not fit into the idealistic image of a harmonious organ music. The history of literary reception can also be cacophonic.

### *A panorama of world literature and its reception*

Although Meyer clearly focuses on German literature, he aims to provide a transnational panorama. Dante's position as a literary model, as the "creator of the first overwhelming fantastic composition of world literature,"[53] and as the "first representative of individuality"[54] in literary history is emphasized (Meyer 1900: 283); similarly unsurprisingly, Shakespeare and Cervantes are listed as cornerstones of literary history. It is not an unusual canon which is presented by Meyer, but rather, an expectable list in the vein of Romantic literary historians.

What is striking about Meyer's elaborations is his connection of aesthetic aspects (i.e. judgments of the status of works and authors) to questions of reception. He comments repeatedly on the historical and social contexts and preconditions of different kinds of receptions. This is of consequence only in the context of his concept of world literature: on the one hand, a work's qualification as world literature is inherent in the work itself, but, on the other hand, this qualification must be proved again and again in the process of reception. It would certainly be an exaggeration to say that Meyer was propagating literary history as the history of reception, but some of his elaborations at least perceive reception as a constitutive element of literary history. As a catalyst for this idea, his concept of world literature as a literature which transcends the boundaries of epochs and languages was certainly important.

An important question which is difficult to answer is "which recent works of literature must be counted as contemporary world literature?"[55] (Meyer 1900: 286). Although Goethe's concept would certainly allow viewing contemporary literature as world literature in general, Meyer's emphasis on aesthetic categories does not support this possibility. Newer world literature, in Meyer's terminology, is those texts which are primarily important in their time and which have been intensively read in recent years. This intense reception anticipates these works' relevance in the future. Meyer names Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Klopstock, Herder, Wieland, but also Heine and Nietzsche, as authors of world literature in newer German literature, although the motives for their reception have shifted in the present. Recent literature offers Keller, Fontane, C.F. Meyer, and Hauptmann as writers of world literature. Important French authors are Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, the Abbé Prevost, Lesage, Hugo, Flaubert, Zola, Merimée, Anatole France, and some others: it is a vast range, and the reasons for their works' status as world literature are many faceted. Again, however, an intensive and productive reception as well as their impact on other, later authors, are relevant for their status. For Meyer, this aspect makes Shakespeare the most important author in English literary history; Scott, although poetically weaker, had a stronger influence than Milton and Byron; Dickens, George Eliot, Thackeray, Tennyson, and Rudyard Kipling are also part of the canon.

Overviews of other countries are rather short and are basically restricted to Europe: Italy with Manzoni and Carducci, the "north" (which, for Meyer, means Scandinavia and Russia) with Tolstoy, Dostoyevski, Turgenev, Ibsen, and Jens Peter Jacobsen, as well as possibly Björnson and Strindberg: "frequently read, much adored, heavily fought over, and often imitated."[56] For North America, Meyer also lists the "doubtful" ("zweifelhaften") names Bret Harte and Mark Twain (Meyer 1900: 289). His Eurocentrism is hard to ignore. His doubts and assumptions, however, are not directly caused by the works' aesthetic status but, rather, by their

impact on readers and successors (which, then again, might prove their aesthetic value and their importance for the future).

## Meyer's book on present world literature

The 1900 essay concludes with a quotation from a poem by Goethe, printed with the title "Weltliteratur" in Hempel's edition of Goethe's works, and which names historical and cultural characteristics of literature, beginning with King David (cf. Meyer 1900: 291); here, Meyer seems to agree with the label "world literature." In his book on the *Weltliteratur der Gegenwart*, published thirteen years later, he quotes the same verses, remarking that they should be called "folk poetry"[57] rather than world literature (Meyer 1913a: 16). However, his book otherwise follows the traces of his earlier essay. The book's subtitle also proves a matter that had already been evident in his essay: world literature is being examined from a German point of view.[58] The first chapter is dedicated to the term and conception of "Weltliteratur," the second deals with the prehistory of world literature. In the third chapter, Meyer elaborates on the literature of the present; the following chapters go into detail on this subject with regard to literary forms (chapter 4), types and motifs (chapter 5), poets (chapter 6), and individualities (chapter 7). The early chapters, in particular, are relevant for the concept of world literature. The later chapters prove that Meyer is a well-read scholar who specializes in European literature, with the contemporary literary historian's typical task of recognizing patterns of order, describing general tendencies, and providing overviews.

### *Specifications, consolidations, extensions*

The definitions of the term "world literature" are repeated with regard to the earlier essay, and in parts consolidated. World literature deals with "great and eternal themes which will remain vital "and" it finds an expression for them that is ultimate and lasting." (Meyer 1913a: 4). To his idea that transhistorical relevance is constitutive of literature, Meyer now adds historical elaborations on the development of the alphabet, the specifics of scriptural culture, tradition, and its media. In his distinction of genres, poetry ("Poesie") is the core and the spirit of all literature ("Kern und Seele jeder Literatur"), ontogenetically and phylogenetically superior to prose. Goethe remains an important measure: "The greatest poet of recent times announces a world literature which is supposed to emerge from a moral and aesthetic consensus of all cultures, with every nation being aware of their individual character and at the same time doing justice to the qualities of other literatures"[59] (Meyer 1913a: 16 f.). On the eve of World War I, this Goethe-inspired agenda, with the idea of every nation contributing to a "harmonious whole"[60] by consciously cultivating its individual character, becomes even more intriguing.

### *Again: world literature and national literature*

The idea of nationality is highlighted by Meyer's emphasis on the fact that the expression "Weltliteratur" presupposes "Nationalliteratur," or at least a broad conception of national literature (Meyer 1913a: 7); regarding earlier distinctions between

world literature and national literature, this is clearly a shift of emphasis. Meyer specifies that world literature is related to the world, as national literature is related to the nation (cf. Meyer 1913a: 7). Again, one must presuppose that literature is the expression of collective and transhistorical ideas and identities. Meyer now gives more attention to the term "Nationalliteratur," which had been ignored thirteen years earlier; like world literature, national literature is not merely additive but, rather, the expression of the individual character of a people, their way of living, and its development (cf. Meyer 1913a: 7).

One can conclude that Meyer aims to communicate his concept of world literature through the concept of national literature, rather than by putting the two into opposition. This also shapes his elaborations on the history of the term "world literature": whereas Antiquity and the Middle Ages were unable to shape this concept, the development of a national consciousness of different peoples, and the resulting idea of national literature, provide the necessary preconditions for such a concept (cf. Meyer 1913a: 10). It would be unfair to see this merely as a concession to the patriotic *Zeitgeist*. However, one should be critical of Meyer's explanations of Goethe's use of the term "world" and his assumption that world literature might be an "augmented national literature"[61] (Meyer 1913a: 11) – and of his emphatic quotation of Goethe's insistence on Germany's major role in shaping world literature (Meyer 1913a: 11). What Meyer – who generally is in favor of an appraisal of various exponents of modern literatures – sees as the characteristics of German writers is their individuality, the development of a range of literary varieties and the "democratization of form"[62] (in Meyer's eyes, however, this is a tendency towards the "popular,"[63] cf. Meyer 1913a: 225). Meyer's writings emphatically aim to relate the individuality of writers, philosophers, and scientists to a sociocultural context (cf. Meyer 1897: 43–59). His elaborations on themes of world literature as well as his presentation of German literary history prove the indissoluble tension between his aim to grasp the individuality and uniqueness of writers and their works, on the one hand, and his wish to provide overviews of epochs and systematized literary history, on the other.

## Notes

1 Translated from German (including quotations from primary sources) by Mark Schmitt.
2 "mächtig fließender[r] Strom"
3 "Deshalb also, weil der mächtig fließende Strom der Weltliteratur von Zeit zu Zeit stockt, weil er schmäler wird, selbst ein Mal unter der Erde fortfließt, um dann mit erneuter Gewalt hervorzubrechen."
4 "Dies ist die eigentliche Harmonie der Sphären: mit wunderbarem Einklang begleiten die Töne der Poesie und der Musik der Völker ihre Entwicklung, ihre Schicksale, ihr Blühen und Vergehen."
5 "es bilde sich eine allgemeine Weltliteratur, worin uns Deutschen eine ehrenvolle Rolle vorbehalten ist"
6 "Vorschreiten des Menschengeschlechts"
7 "weiteren Aussichten der Welt-und Menschenverhältnisse"
8 "Um etwas, was sich bildet, vorbereitet, einleitet, was gehofft und unter bestimmtem Gesichtspunkt doch auch nicht ohne Bedenken erwartet wird – um ein Zukünftiges handelt es sich für Goethe."

9 “Ich bin überzeugt, daß eine Weltliteratur sich bilde, daß alle Nationen dazu geneigt sind und deshalb freundliche Schritte thun.”
10 “progressive Universalpoesie”
11 “Wir glauben an eine Weltliteratur, aber nicht an eine zukünftige und nicht an eine etwa eben entstandene, sondern an eine solche, die so alt ist wie die Literatur überhaupt, und die heute vielleicht nicht einmal stärker entwickelt ist als in früheren Perioden.”
12 “Wir sind von der inneren Gleichartigkeit der Poesie in allen Zeiten zu innig überzeugt, als daß wir eine neue Epoche der Weltliteratur älteren Epochen der Nationaldichtung entgegenzusetzen vermöchten.”
13 “Dogma von der Stetigkeit und der langsam-gleichmäßigen Entwicklung”
14 “überall sanfte Uebergänge, stetige Entwicklungen”
15 “vulcanische Neubildungen”
16 “die Gesammtheit aller überhaupt beachtenswerthen literarischen oder auch nur fast literarischen Leistungen”
17 “Werturtheil”
18 “von Anfang an alle Literatur”
19 “[ … ] allgemeine Bedeutung [ … ] – dies aber auch jedenfalls, sei es gestern entstanden oder vor achttausend Jahren.”
20 “Wir fassen die Literatur [ … ] als eine Einheit auf – als das Werk dieses einen großen, wunderbaren Individuums: des Menschen. Zu allen Zeiten und unter allen Sonnen hat er danach gestrebt, Unaussprechliches auszusprechen, dem vorübergehenden Moment Dauer zu verleihen, Gemeinsamkeit der Empfindung durch Worte hervorzurufen. In glücklichen Augenblicken ist ihm dies Wunder wieder und immer wieder gelungen [ … ].”
21 “vorübergehenden Empfindungen”
22 “vergänglichen Eindrücken”
23 “Nationalpoesie”
24 “Gefühle, Eindrücke, Vorstellungen, an denen wir Alle Theil haben”
25 “die ganze Menschheit”
26 “ihre tiefsten Empfindungen”
27 “Winterschlaf”
28 “Leben erweckend”
29 “unvertilgbare[r] Lebenskraft”
30 “naturwissenschaftlichen Entdecker und Erfinder”
31 “mit dem Worte ‘Weltliteratur’ Mißbrauch treiben”
32 “gelehrtes Werk”
33 “dauernder literarischer Bedeutung”
34 “fernster Vorzeit, da der Mensch noch halb thierisch auf der Erde umher kroch, durch den unwegbaren Wald schlich und sich auf die Pfahlbauten am See rettete”
35 “Schauer der verfinsterten Sonne und die Freude an ihrem Wiedererwachen, die furchtbare Erfahrung des Todes an dem Häuptling oder der Geliebten, die übermannende Freude am Sieg”
36 “elementarer Weise”
37 “eine Art uralter Poesie”
38 “übercivilisirten 19. Jahrhundert”
39 “chorische Poesie”
40 “zu Höherem schreiten”
41 “uncultivirten Stamm”
42 “dumpfen Naturlaut im Walde”
43 “biblische Poesie”
44 “mittelbar und unmittelbar [ … ] auf hundert Wegen die spätere Literatur aller europäischen Nationen beeinflußt”
45 “Culturnationen”
46 “Born der classischen Bildung”
47 “eigentliche Weltliteratur [ … ], eine Universalpoesie, wie sie den Romantikern vorschwebt”
48 “Culturkampf”

49 "lebendige Macht"
50 "kleinere Minnesänger"
51 "Wir dürfen wohl hoffen, daß die unablässige Arbeit der deutschen Philologie seit den Tagen der Brüder Grimm, Lachmann's und Uhland's auch in diesem Sinn nicht vergeblich war. Die hervorragendsten Namen aus der mittelhochdeutschen Poesie verbinden sich heut wieder mit einer lebensvolleren Anschauung"
52 "Aus dem 'Parcival' klingt, durch Wagner's freilich überkühn ins Modern-Philosophische übersetzende Dichtung vermittelt, unserer Zeit wieder der tiefere Grundaccord entgegen, der dies unvergleichliche Werk in die Kette der höchsten Schöpfungen deutschen Geistes einfügt [ … ]."
53 "Schöpfer der ersten gewaltigen Phantasiedichtung der Weltliteratur"
54 "erste[r] große[r] Vertreter der Individualität"
55 "was an neuerer Literatur zu der Weltliteratur der Gegenwart zu zählen sei"
56 "stark gelesen, viel bewundert, heftig befehdet, vielfach nachgeahmt"
57 "Volkspoesie"
58 "Vom deutschen Standpunkt aus betrachtet"
59 "Als 'Weltliteratur' verkündet der größte Dichter der neueren Zeit eine Dichtung, die aus der sittlich-ästhetischen Übereinstimmung der Völker entstehen soll, und zwar indem jede Nation sich ihrer Eigenart bewußt bleibt, aber auch der der anderen Literaturen gerecht wird."
60 "höhere Harmonie des Ganzen"
61 "gesteigerte Nationalliteratur"
62 "Demokratisierung der Form"
63 "Volkstümlich"

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# 7
# ALBERT GUÉRARD
## Reworking humanism for a troubled century

*Dominique Vaugeois*

Albert Léon Guérard (1880–1959), a French-born scholar, who emigrated to the United States in 1906 and taught for twenty years at Stanford University, was a lifelong opponent of nationalism; his astute political and historical sense directly informed his theoretical work on literature. In 1958 he famously asked his fellow comparatists "How and When Shall We Commit Suicide?" (Guérard 1958). "Not just yet," he answered. Comparative literature, unlike other disciplines, has a mission to complete: "world literature" should become redundant. While Guérard's thought on world literature is inseparable from this scholarly activism, his political culture and awareness did not prevent him from developing a coherent and insightful conceptual approach to literature and to scholarly methodology, certain aspects of which continue to be relevant today.

The rigor of his reflections on literature is not always immediately apparent beneath his pleasant and often playful style, full of irony, gentle mocking, rhetorical surprises, and the smiling modesty of a teacher whose pedagogical voice shines through into his prose. However, the pleasure that we have in reading Guérard should not obscure the depth and the coherence of his thought. His prodigious culture manifests itself in the density of literary and historical references, drawn from a broad palette of countries and epochs, that he combines and associates with deceptive ease.

While it would be easy to see in Guérard's hope that world literature would contribute to erasing the "nationalist heresy" a utopian idealism, the reality is much more complex. Embracing his Goethean and, more generally, Enlightenment heritage, he rethinks the theoretical underpinnings of literature and its practice.

### A world perspective against national approaches

Goethe remains Guérard's primary and primordial reference: he is the impetus and the icon of world literature, and a model of cosmopolitanism. Yet, despite his admiration, Guérard takes from him few arguments beyond the notion that cultural exchange is in the national cultural self-interest.

As a symbol, however, Goethe is important: along with Voltaire and Rousseau, he stands as a representative of the Enlightenment, a pre-nationalist intellectual Eden. "The keenest minds of the eighteenth century owed allegiance to the Enlightenment rather than to the territorial state. Not only did poets and philosophers cheerfully serve a foreign king; but soldiers and financiers felt free to move from land to land" (Guérard 1935: 129). Guérard's enthusiasm for the Enlightenment is proportional to his animosity towards Romanticism, responsible in his eyes for the birth of nationalism in Europe. The Enlightenment appears as an ideal time, and a very strong model, perhaps overly so. Reason trumps all other considerations, including national ones, becoming itself almost a State or even an Empire to which one can owe "allegiance." And while Guérard professes admiration for this period, his quest for world literature is not nostalgic, but consists essentially in the assertion of the inherently international nature of all literature. The past serves perhaps as an example for the present, but the intention is to establish a scientific rather than ideological basis for world literature. "In thus defining the domain of literature without reference to the map, we are not preaching internationalism: we are only noting elementary and uncontroverted facts. It is those who would introduce the question of nationality into the esthetic field who are guilty of injecting a political element where it does not belong" (Guérard 1940: 27).

Though Guérard's enterprise is intertwined with eighteenth-century humanism, his primary conceptual task is to make world literature intellectually acceptable for the twentieth century by bringing it up to date with modern thought. Literature of all centuries, including the twentieth, is inherently already "World"; the strategic difficulty is freeing this initial natural state from obstacles imposed by nationalism. Thus, world literature is not something that needs to be built, or a distant but worthy goal: rather, it is the natural condition of literature which has always been international.

Several types of arguments are used to this end. The Enlightenment is only one of many such periods of free international intellectual exchanges: "The great themes common to all medieval Europe – the religious works in Latin, the miracles and moralities, the farces and tales, the Carolingian and Arthurian epic cycles, Reynard the Fox and the Romance of the Rose – give the period a cultural unity far deeper than national differences. Humanism, Neo-Classicism, the Enlightenment, were Pan-European phenomena" (Guérard 1935: 130).

Not only does an international literary canon already exist, but it is already abundantly shared, and not only by the cultural elite: "Cosmopolitanism begins in the nursery, with Æsop, Brer Rabbit, the Grimm Brothers, Andersen, Pinocchio; it continues through adolescence, with Jules Verne and Alexandre Dumas; it reaches the masses, with the Bible and *Les Misérables*" (Guérard 1935: 130). Likewise, and in a recurrent parallel between the global scene and individual experience, an initial literary experience that is also international is evoked: "The common man retains this freedom from prejudice until he is taught better – I mean until he is taught worse. Adults are quite unconscious of national frontiers in the literary field. If there be but one book in the lone cabin, it will be the Book, the Bible, [ … ] that book came to us down the ages, through men who spoke alien tongues and lived under alien skies" (Guérard 1940: 4).

Beyond the shared cultural heritage and the historical examples of intense literary exchange, science and religion are cited as examples of discourse of universal intent that naturally escape from the national perspective. Literature, it is argued, should be afforded the same treatment.

In an important essay, "Herder's Spiritual Heritage: Nationalism, Romanticism, Democracy," published in 1934, Guérard clearly places the blame for the rise of nationalism in Europe on Romanticism. Johann Gottfried Herder, "that great originator of high-sounding confusions" (Guérard 1934: 3), represents the culmination of a process begun in previous generations, and that leads to Hitler, "the disciple of Herder" (Guérard 1934: 4). The path that leads to nationalism begins with the reinforced identity of language groups in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to the assertion of "blood" identity, to the desire for concrete political recognition of this identity, to the formation of a Nation whose self-interest is placed above all others. The result is, internally, uniformization (local and regional differences are erased) and, externally, imperial aggression.

Democracy is, for Guérard, the other child of Romanticism, and therein lies an ambiguity essential to understanding his position: the first step in the nationalist process, the call for the recognition of the German language-group, was a response to French cultural hegemony. The transition from the cosmopolitan classicism of the Enlightenment to nationalistic Romanticism is also a transition from an imposed, foreign cultural sphere to a local one, and from the cultural domination of the social elite to a more popular, and perhaps democratic, cultural model. "The connection with democracy is easier to trace. There again we have to face a contradiction. [ … ] The cosmopolitan culture against which Nationalism rebelled was that of a social elite. As against this sophistication, Nationalism – and Romanticism – upheld the common heritage of the common man: his native speech, his untutored folk songs, his primitive feelings, even his uncontrolled passions" (Guérard 1934: 7).

There is admiration for Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, especially for its rationalist and humanist aspects, but there is no real nostalgia, for the world of the early twentieth century is not an environment propitious to that particular form of world literature. In the twentieth century, in the West, democracy and a restructured cultural domain with the emergence of mass culture are incompatible with the elitism of the Enlightenment. Thus, Guérard's task is not simply to argue in favor of an international conception of literature, but to rework certain key conceptual elements to fit his time.

The first step in rethinking literature, both the thing itself and the critical discourse produced to explain it, is to sever the causal relationship between a work and its origin. The primary adversary here is Hippolyte Taine and his pervasive theory of race, environment and time. In *Literature and Society* (1935), Guérard examines each of these notions, often with delicate yet brutal irony, in their capacity to truly determine the work that is finally written. "The hygrometry of literature is hard to trace," he writes with typical feigned innocence. "Greece is dry, England is damp, and both have bred great writers. Further still on either side, we find the narrative and poetical wealth of the Arabian desert, and the no less remarkable flowering of song and romance in sodden Ireland" (Guérard 1935: 52). Racial and biological determinisms

receive the harshest mocking. Taine's races (Latin, Anglo-Saxon … ) are of course simply "subdivisions of the Indo-European," yet "Taine evades the difficulty neatly by not defining concrete races at all. In the course of his five volumes, he frequently refers to 'the English race' or to 'the Anglo-Saxon race.' Therein lies a fallacy which is as obvious as it is indestructible" (Guérard 1935: 37). Once again, race is a reification of language groups – "when we say race, we mean language group" (Guérard 1935: 37) – and is mistakenly used as a biological substitute for culture and to mask the undeniable weight of tradition.

Culture is a more important factor than nature and literature cannot be explained or predicted based on its origin. When "race, environment and time" make "La Fontaine a 'fable-tree', which bore fables as inevitably as a pear tree brings forth pears," Guérard maliciously points out that Racine and the fabulist were "both born in Champagne, within a few leagues and within a few years of each other, in exactly the same social stratum. The one wrote mocking and cynical fables, the other tragedies of fatal passion. And of the thousands of Champenois whose 'race, environment and time' were the same as theirs, not one can compare with either of them" (Guérard 1935: 134–35).

The essential point here is the introduction of a conceptual separation, or rather, a nuanced articulation between literature, as an aesthetic object, and society, as an historical reality. The idea that literature could be explained as the expression of a Nation channeled through an individual writer cannot be draped in scientific justification. Determinism, even of a literary kind, is a loaded word for Guérard, who invokes the French nationalist Maurice Barrès' definition of nationalism: "the acceptance – the joyous and proud acceptance – of a determinism" (Guérard 1934: 3, see Barrès 1902: 10). Freeing literature from national determinism is as much a political act as a scholarly one. These two levels are never truly distinct.

Strategically, in the task of disentangling literature from the national considerations that would invalidate the cosmopolitan perspective, Taine is a useful and ultimately easy target. Yet, beyond the irony and the refutations, Guérard, himself an accomplished historian, cannot simply abandon to Taine the project of a scientific, sociological and historical foundation for literary scholarship. True literature is necessarily exceptional: "literature does not deal with averages, but with individual achievements" (Guérard 1935: 48). This explains the difference between the idiosyncratic genius of La Fontaine and Racine, and between the two men and their countless Champenois contemporaries. The creative personality cannot but be in at least partial contradiction with its environment and its time. Conversely, "the worst writer in the language can boast: 'I too have Race, Environment and Time!'" (Guérard 1935: 134). Beyond the simple combat with nationalism in literature, this treatment of Taine is a means of defining the specific territory of literature: "the proper field of literature is literature, not nationality, not even language" (Guérard 1935: 140). As we shall see, for literature to be "World Literature," it must be first of all an aesthetic object; yet Guérard refuses to let literature and literary scholarship drift away from the real world, and consistently adopts a pragmatic approach, avoiding aestheticism and anchoring literary pursuits in a social and political context. In this apparent contradiction lies much of the subtlety of his thought.

## A social theory of taste

For a theorist like Guérard, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, when his most important works were written, the temptation in rejecting national causality would be to lead world literature away from the "real world" by, for example, embracing formalist or textualist approaches, as did the Prague School and, in the English-speaking world, the New Criticism at almost the same time. He shares with these approaches the recognition of the specificity of the aesthetic object and the necessity, for scholars, to develop the appropriate tools. "Literary criticism" is in the process of constituting itself as a distinct social science, at a time when these disciplines are defining themselves and their respective domains. While Guérard's work must be seen in this context, it is clear that his international perspective brings an additional nuance: politics are not banished from literary thought, and thus literature is never removed from society. This is perhaps what brings him closest to contemporary critical theory and practice.

Taste, both public and individual, will serve as the articulation between the social and the aesthetic. The question of taste, and more broadly of literary value, is doubly important as regards world literature, because this pair of notions is inevitably linked to the constitution of an international canon. The recognition of world literature as a relevant scholarly category depends to a great extent on the solidity of the reasoning behind the selection that is made.

Guérard approaches the aesthetic nature of the literary object through what we might call a social theory of taste. "Literature," he writes, "is that which, out of the mass of mere writing, has been selected by taste: so, if you define taste, you also define literature" (Guérard 1940: 85). Or, again: "Literature may be the reflection of Eternal Beauty: empirically, it is, first of all, the reflection of Public Taste" (Guérard 1935: 3). "Eternal Beauty" will never be more than a hypothesis; "Public Taste" has a historical existence, it can be documented and observed. In an even more iconoclastic gesture, Guérard defines literature as an industry: "In our pluto-democracy, literature may be roughly defined in terms of the book industry" (Guérard 1935: 7), an industry in which success or failure depends on the nearly impossible anticipation of what will please its readers. This gesture grounds literature, and literary scholarship, in a social and economic reality. It is in the area of taste that literature and society come into contact, not in the origin of the author's personality or as an emanation of a supposed national essence. Taste allows literature to become both a social and an aesthetic object.

This approach allows the theorist to recognize the specific nature of art and literature, refuting material, biological and national determinisms, while pursuing the interactions of the aesthetic with its audience, and with history. The perspective anticipates that of Pierre Bourdieu when he defines the literary field as having a social existence, yet determined by rules and struggles that are largely independent of the broader sociological context. Guérard's repositioning of literature in the social and historical reality of its readers is a way of affirming the place of literary studies, and in particular, of comparative literature, though he did not appreciate the term, among the social sciences. Writing in the first half of the twentieth century, he lacks the conceptual and methodological tools necessary for what would be

considered today a sociological approach, but his insights on the question are interesting because of where they place literature on what has become an epistemological map.

Concretely, his exploration of "Public Taste" relies on the individual subject's experience, and this brings us back to another central theme: personality. Taste is social and collective, it is also psychological and individual: "[Taste] may be unaccountable in terms of clear reason; but, if it were wholly capricious, it would cease to exist as taste. Collective taste stands between custom, proud of its invincible inertia, and the vanguard of fashion, ever eager for change" (Guérard 1940: 88). The relative coherence of individual and collective taste is invoked to prove its relevance as a descriptive term. Going even further, Guérard makes the stability of taste a means of self-preservation: "Taste is therefore an instrument of self-realization and self-defense. It seeks to preserve, for the individual or for the group, that consistency without which there can be no personality" (Guérard 1940: 88). So while individual aesthetic judgment remains free and "unaccountable," taste is a residual tendency that is, ultimately, "a manifestation of personality" (Guérard 1940: 93).

Guérard explores with considerable detail various approaches to taste and literary value, and in particular considers the position of what we would today call extreme relativism, as brilliantly debated by Barbara Hernstein Smith in *Contingencies of Value* (1991). Interestingly, he does not attempt to refute this position, which he calls "radical individualism," in conceptual terms, but argues that it is impossible to practice, and challenges his reader to sustain it for more than twenty-four hours. The search for an unadulterated aesthetic reaction finally ruins the possibility of judgment: "Do I really like Shakespeare? How can I tell?" (Guérard 1935: 13). Refusing universal schemes of literary value, he maintains that all aesthetic reactions cannot be of equal weight. There is, however, no social hierarchy of taste. The differences in quality of taste are mainly visible within the scope of a single subject: "Your own hasty, casual, unreflective impressionism is not the best that you can achieve. You can, by taking thought, add more than a cubit to your mental stature. On this level, it will not suffice to say: 'I like what I like': snap judgments have no standing here. You are led to ask: 'What is it in me that likes this thing? In what manner? To what degree?' This criticism is exploration: of literature through the self, of the self through literature" (Guérard 1940: 456).

Thus, individual taste is free, yet can be educated. Each reader should be able to evaluate, and improve, her own taste. The evaluation of judgment cannot be simply eliminated from our aesthetic practices, yet there is no intersubjective framework for comparing the quality or "correctness" of taste between individuals. The focus here is on bettering oneself: "Taste grows more enlightened, surer of its own power, better aware of its own flaws, more deft in its methods, through experience and exercise" (Guérard 1940: 85). As a theory of literary value, Guérard's solution to the problem of the individual and collective nature of aesthetic judgment is ingenious: he abandons external, intersubjective aesthetic values, thus avoiding the normative dead end; yet he maintains the notion of excellence by limiting its scope to individual experience. The grounding of aesthetic value in the individual's pursuit of quality provides a means of preserving literary value as a scholarly object.

## "An open association of free men"

By insisting on the social nature of literary taste, Guérard seems to propose the theoretical infrastructure, or at least a road map, for a modernized version of Goethean Weltliteratur. The limits of this renewal, however, are those of humanism itself, which the author of an intellectual autobiography called *Education of a Humanist* (1949) makes no attempt to subvert. His role could be seen as that of a relay for humanism, transmitting into the turmoil of the twentieth century a complete system of thought and values. Today, though, in an international context (political, economic, cultural, scholarly) that has significantly evolved since Guérard published his major works, the ideological presuppositions of humanism pose new problems.

Perhaps the clearest image of the goal of Guérard's activism in favor of world literature is what he describes as an international literary "Club," an alternative to a world organized according to a nationalist logic: "What we are studying in this book is the Constitution and By-laws of the World Literature Club. This Club should be an open association of free men. The sole basis for admission should be a taste for literature, not a prescribed taste in literature. It is, as we have attempted to show, a more natural Club for us to join than the national one" (Guérard 1940: 91). The political finality of the image is fundamental. It is here that the theme of individual betterment through a literary education meets Guérard's political agenda. The form of the "club" and the description of its members are equally telling: these are "free men," improved and refined through their practice of literature, "this necessary and profitable interaction between individual and collective taste" (Guérard 1940: 91). Here we recognize the liberal humanist subject: universal, because club membership requires only the exploration "of literature through the self, of the self through literature"; master of his own history, because this exploration is supposed to, collectively, repair the damage caused by romanticism and nationalism; liberal, because the fulfillment of individual potential is a liberation from the vicissitudes and accidents of history, in particular cultural and political divisions: "It means chiefly liberation from that sense of inferiority which leads either to diffidence or to assertiveness. The man of culture neither shrinks nor blusters. He feels that he can meet anyone in the land on terms, not of equality, but of mutual respect" (Guérard 1940: 45). Emancipated from the prejudices of his time, and from the particularities of his culture, the reading subject enjoys improved relations with others who have benefited from a similar exploration.

Between specifically literary concerns and a prospective world view, the individual's search for excellence is a key element. Just as we are expected to refine our taste, through experience, study and reflection, self-interest should motivate us to always seek the best, and it is this search that takes us beyond the limits of our own culture: "From the kindergarten to the grave, man seeks the best. If the best is grown in our own parish, we must not despise it; but, should it come from the antipodes, it is still the best" (Guérard 1935: 141). Guérard refers extensively to Matthew Arnold's "disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" (Arnold 2009: 27), and carefully rereads Arnold to explicitly place the accent on a reflective process of improvement and liberation rather than

simply on the stockpiling of new and better ideas. The goal "is not, like mere knowledge, a burden, however precious," but "a mode of release" (Guérard 1940: 45). The focus on individual experience and on the individual's search for quality allows Guérard to introduce a generalized model for world literature that does not depend on any particular canon or set of criteria for determining which books should be read. However, the model also propagates the fundamental humanist values upon which it is based.

Guérard's enduring commitment to the political dimension of literature compels our admiration. From our twenty-first-century vantage point, his political choices and interpretations seem consistently wise, sometimes chillingly forward-looking, as when he wrote in 1943: "But there is a Hitler caged in every breast; let us make sure that he will not break loose shrieking: 'Manifest destiny!' The thought of every sane man, when he watches the murderous antics of the Nazis, should be: 'There but for the grace of God, went I'" (Guérard 1943: 553). Guérard's approach to world literature is deeply informed by the geopolitical and ideological situation of his time. That intelligence, personality and literature might, through a reinforcement of an international context, overcome nationalistic violence was a relevant aspiration in the first half of the twentieth century. Today the problem of nationalism is still far from resolved, but, with the rise of globalization, the "world" has become the scene of new forms of hegemony (see Kadir 2004). Peace in Europe was a sufficiently difficult challenge that the question of colonialism could slip entirely out of view, except occasionally as concerns race. If Guérard has a political and literary blind spot, it is in the underestimation of the critical value of cultural difference and in his confidence in Enlightenment universalism: "The first, and lesser, benefit of World Literature is to reveal to us the picturesque, the delightful variety of mankind. The greater benefit is to make us conscious of its fundamental unity" (Guérard 1940: 24).

Difference is perhaps interesting, but accidental and secondary; the search for commonality, the universality of the humanist self, is profound and truly beneficial. If, in its essence, world literature is to filter out the provincial and the picturesque, we are left to ask on what basis the fundamental unity will be chosen, and by whom. The constant search for "the best" is assumed to lead inevitably to this single locus, wherever it might be, and not to a plurality of conflicting visions. Even if taste is considered as a motivation rather than a set of positive criteria, the structure of the search for this "fundamental unity" reintroduces a different kind of value, with its own ideological and geopolitical consequences.

It is with optimism that Guérard writes, in 1935: "But it is possible, through a cautious hybridization of cultures, to strengthen their common elements and minimize their differences until they cease to be a cause of strife" (Guérard 1935: 139). Today, such a call for international uniformization and harmonization organized around a central identity would be met with suspicion. The choice of an ideal common cultural ground might have been possible when the "world" of literature was limited, in practice, as Guérard readily admitted, to the West (Guérard 1940: 16); now, the prerequisite of commonality would be difficult to impose.

It is not surprising that the rapid evolution of the geopolitical world has rendered obsolete certain aspects of a reflection so closely related to the political and ideological environment of the early twentieth century. Yet Guérard remains a

perspicacious reader and an entertaining writer, clearly in the tradition of humanist essayists. More importantly, his critical vision of literature provides a rare comprehensive view of most of the central questions of literary scholarship in both his day and ours.

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# 8
# ERICH AUERBACH AND THE DEATH AND LIFE OF WORLD LITERATURE

*Aamir R. Mufti*

> Life has always long since begun, and it is always still going on.
>
> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Auerbach 2003: 549)

The Auerbach revival of the last quarter century presents itself to us as a paradox. On the one hand is Auerbach the literary historian of almost encyclopedic reach and a paragon of the traditional scholarly virtues. This is decidedly a conservative and elite figure, a return to whom allows one to escape, however briefly, from the long nightmare of the political and theory. On the other hand, especially in the works of such scholars as Edward W. Said and Paul A. Bové, Auerbach appears as a sort of exemplary figure of what it means to inculcate a critical consciousness, and thus as a significant resource for any project of cultural criticism that views itself in oppositional terms, in a posture of negation toward the dominant forms of society and culture (Said 1983; Bové 1984). And as Herbert Lindenberger has argued in his brief survey of Auerbach reception in recent years, the latter continues to exercise a certain gravitational pull upon "postcolonial critics who followed in the wake of *Orientalism*" (Lindenberger 2004: 46–47; Mufti 1998). He seems, in a very real sense, an indeterminate figure – conservative humanist and engaged critic of modern culture, cosmopolitan and exile, European mandarin and Jewish refugee. The bulk of my effort here, however, is to examine Auerbach's reformulation of Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur* ("world literature"), which I regard as a complex attempt to comprehend certain aspects of the contemporary world, namely, the question of culture in its global or planet-wide ramifications.

Because it belongs to, and addresses, the early years of the emergence of our contemporary era, the deservedly famous essay "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" (Auerbach 1952/1969) still speaks urgently to us. (It was co-translated into English by Edward Said in 1969 and is influential for the latter's work in a number of ways, a question to which I return.) It is profoundly a text of the early postwar years marked by the rapid disintegration of the colonial empires, the accompanying expansion of

the global system of nation-states, and, of course, the wake of the war itself, in Europe and elsewhere, and in particular the aftermath of the Holocaust. In that sense, it can be compared with a very different kind of text – different in language, discipline, and larger sensibility – namely, Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, in which the postwar, postcolonial European subject, abroad in the world, appears as ethnographer, as a critic of Western ethnocentrism, whereas in Auerbach's essay it appears in the role of philological humanist, a critic of the narrowness of attachments to the viewpoint of "national" language and literature. In both texts, we might say, the investment seems to be in the refashioning of the Western subject of knowledge in the era of globalism. In fact, these texts belong to a larger field of contemporary works by European writers struggling variously to understand (but also define) the new "predicament of culture" in the emerging world (Clifford 1988). A fuller examination of this cluster of texts will have to wait for another occasion. Suffice it to say here that this new world is characterized for them, in part, by the loss of the centrality of Europe and Europeans that had been the *sine qua non* of the colonial world, and by the necessity of confronting the consequences of the new visibility of the formerly colonized peoples, the old continent's various historically constituted others, on the twentieth century's historical stage. Today we might say that this set of texts is located within, and concerned with, the transformed field of culture on the threshold of the postcolonial, "globalization" phase of the world capitalist economy.

"Philology and *Weltliteratur*" consists of three main sections. The first considers the conditions of emergence of a new concept of *Weltliteratur*, distinct from the one attributable to the Goethean tradition and its humanism. The second examines the "practical" problems and difficulties raised by this new conception. And the third offers a possible approach to these methodological questions – a new approach to the possibility of "synthesis" in an age of micro-specializations – concluding with a consideration of the problem of what we may call critical consciousness, or, to put it another way altogether, the knowledge-subject appropriate to this new philology of *Weltliteratur*. The essay ends by quoting the famous passage from Hugh of St. Victor which Said returned to repeatedly in his writings: "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land" (Auerbach 1969: 17; Said 1983: 7). In the Epilogue to his magnum opus, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Auerbach had already spoken of his eleven-year stay in Istanbul after fleeing from the Third Reich, away from the familiar intellectual world of central Europe, as both painful and enabling for the creation of that unique retrospective look at the expanse of European literary history (Auerbach 2003 [1946]: 557; Green 1982; Said 1983; Damrosch 1995; Mufti 1998; Apter 2003; Konuk 2010). And in its first chapter Auerbach had made a strenuous case for the primacy of the biblical mode of narrative over the Homeric, situating the birth of the West precisely in the establishment of that hierarchy – a remarkable gesture made from the verge of European Jewish extinction (for very different takes on Auerbach as a Jewish thinker, see Lambropoulos 1993 and Porter 2008). The final passage of the essay now distils the historical experience of the Jewish victims of fascism into the figure of the critical humanist and philologist as such as an exilic persona, and I shall return to this image, and the use that Said makes of it, later in this essay.

## Nationalism, Orientalism, world literature

One familiar way to understand the concept of *Weltliteratur* is to place it at the other end of an axis from national literature, but Auerbach's essay begins by taking apart the possibility of any such straightforward conception. It opens with a question whose very condition of possibility is historical transformation: "It is time to ask what meaning the word *Weltliteratur* can still have if we relate it, as Goethe did, both to the past and to the future." The very presupposition of the concept was "mankind's division into many cultures." But today, "our earth, the domain of *Weltliteratur*, is growing smaller and losing its diversity." The explosion of nationalisms across the continent and the world in recent decades, in which each socio-political entity seems to be asserting its own individuality, is in fact the means for the establishment of the most rigid forms of uniformity: "To be sure, national wills are stronger and louder than ever, yet in every case they promote the same standards and forms of modern life … Standardization, in short, dominates everywhere" (Auerbach 1969: 2). Auerbach thus takes as the starting-point for the essay – I shall return presently to his notion of the *Ansatzpunkt* – the paradox that the defining characteristic of the era of supposed national differentiation turns out to be a sort of leveling, the pressure for replication of the same political and cultural forms everywhere. Following Auerbach in this direction, romantic nationalism, whose entire *raison d'être* in each case is to be the unique expression of a distinct people, would have to be understood instead as delivering societies and peoples to a worldwide ensemble, the global system of nation-states – a system that allows each social entity to be distinct, as it were, in exactly the same way. And the consequences for our understanding of *Weltliteratur* are equally significant: it emerged precisely in the era of the national form, rather than as a sign of its overcoming, as so many commentators have suggested over the years.

Modern nationalism and the kinds of cultural possibilities that it represents, which were the social and cultural background of the recent upheaval and devastation on a continental and even global scale, thus constitute a prominent antagonist in Auerbach's essay, which seeks to expose, "with equanimity so that we will not hate whoever opposes us," the structure of claims inherent to this mythos of the modern world (Auerbach 1969: 7). Furthermore, Auerbach is aware that the critical humanist – philologist of world literature – cannot claim to be standing outside the powerful social forces he is describing and seeking to oppose and is, in fact, himself an agent of the process of leveling. The methods he espouses – and I return to this question below – themselves are facilitators of the process pushing the world toward "a single literary culture, only a few literary languages, and perhaps even a single literary language." Were such an extreme situation ever to be actualized, "the notion of *Weltliteratur* would be at once realized and destroyed" (Auerbach 1969: 3).

As I have argued at greater length elsewhere, *Weltliteratur* must be understood as a product of what may be called the Orientalist moment (Mufti 2010). Even at a very concrete and biographical level, we would have to note that Goethe's first reported usage of the term occurred in the context of having read "a Chinese novel" (Goethe 1998: 164–66; Damrosch 2003: 1–4; see Mani and Tsu in this volume). This neologistic usage could in fact be viewed as a retrospective look at the writer's own

trajectory of engagement with the translations – from Kalidasa to Hafez – that modern Orientalism had begun to make available to European literary publics in his lifetime (Strich 1949; Mufti 2010). The backdrop of Goethe's personal "discovery" of the Orient is a much larger historical process. In the course of the so-called "lexicographic-philological" revolution (Casanova 2004), extending from the late eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, the availability in European languages of the works of non-European traditions of writing expanded dramatically. To put it more precisely, the period marked an expansion, and radical transformation, of what had hitherto been a largely European "republic of letters" into a global one, incorporating, *at least in theory*, all cultures of writing across the globe. It marked the systematic consolidation of knowledge forms concerned with language and literature precisely by pushing outward the borderlines of the map of literate cultures and extending backward received notions of antiquity (Schwab 1984).

The Orientalist moment was part of a highly charged historical process, an explosive and violent incorporation of vast populations and civilizational complexes in "the East" into the global imperial system. (This political charge is reflected in the polemical register that came to predominate in Said's famous study of the moment; see Arac in this volume.) The "discovery," dissemination, and systemization of "Oriental" textual materials, and their codification into "national" traditions, played a significant role in the consolidation of the European empires. Pascale Casanova's influential recent work misconstrues this historical moment, viewing it as consisting largely of intra-European developments, rather than as a globally expansionist process that accompanied the expansion of the European empires during the Industrial Revolution (Casanova 2004; Mufti 2010; see Buescu in this volume).

Auerbach too pays scant attention to this Euro-imperial orientation in the emergence of *Weltliteratur*, except to note that the "world literatures that were available to Goethe at the end of his life were more numerous than those which were known at the time of his birth" (Auerbach 1969: 4). It is important to note that Auerbach uses the term in the plural here, as he does again in the following sentence about the goals of erstwhile "historicist humanism," the passage I have already quoted above. For *Weltliteratur* in the Goethean sense had *presumed* the existence of historically discrete cultures of writing. But although "compared to what is available to us today," writes Auerbach, "the number [available to Goethe] was small," the "conception of *Weltliteratur* advocated in this essay – a conception of the diverse background of a common fate – does not seek to affect or alter that which has already begun to occur, albeit contrary to expectation; the present conception accepts as an inevitable fact that world-culture is being standardized" (Auerbach 1969: 7). I shall return shortly to Auerbach's sense of the difference between his own notion of *Weltliteratur* and that of Goethe, its more restrained or skeptical nature. But what is significant here for our purposes is Auerbach's relegating of the origins of *Weltliteratur* in the Orientalist refashioning of humanistic knowledge to the realm of the merely quantitative – the availability of "more numerous" world literatures. This numerical multiplication of the available corpus becomes, first of all, the site for raising methodological questions that impact on philology's erstwhile notions of expertise: "Because … of the superabundance of materials, of methods and of points of view, a mastery of that sort has become virtually impossible" (Auerbach 1969: 8). More importantly, however, it implies that

the humanistic intention associated with *Weltliteratur*, namely, that it marks a benevolent and non-hierarchical openness in the West toward the rest of the world, is placed beyond the possibility of critical examination. For as a concept of bourgeois society, *Weltliteratur* is fundamentally a concept of exchange, that is, a concept that recodes an opaque and unequal process of appropriation as a transparent one of supposedly free and equal interchange and communication. And the concept of literature – itself refashioned in the Romantic-Orientalist encounter in the process of the "discovery" of non-European materials – provides the supposedly neutral ground on which the appropriation in fact takes place.

Auerbach's essay, while seeking to refashion the concept of *Weltliteratur* in light of the contemporary turning-point in the history of the West, in effect absolves the Goethean tradition of its involvement with the modern imperial process and remains itself ambivalent about the emerging postcolonial contours of the postwar world. Said once noted that when Auerbach "takes note of how many 'other' literary languages and literatures seemed to have emerged (as if from nowhere: he makes no mention of either colonialism or decolonization), he expresses more anguish and fear than pleasure at the prospect of what he seems so reluctant to acknowledge. Romania is under threat" (Said 1993: 45). This characterization seems something of an exaggeration now, and elsewhere Auerbach speaks more positively of this expansion of literary horizons, notably in his 1948 essay "Vico and Aesthetic Historism" (Auerbach 1984). All the same, despite (and also of course because of) the humanistic ambition he inhabits and invokes – "our conception of *Weltliteratur* is no less human, no less humanistic, than its [Goethean] antecedent" – Auerbach does not seem able to endorse the historical transformation and the unprecedented configurations of the human that it might make possible. However, it is important to point out explicitly that by no means should either this judgment or what follows be read as anything like a denigration or rejection of Auerbach on the grounds of "Eurocentrism" and a denial of the continued relevance of his legacy for our own questions and problems. Quite to the contrary, it is no more and no less than an attempt to demarcate the outer contours of his critical practice and therefore an attempt at better examining our own reliance on it and calibrating our engagement with it.

## Humanism and catastrophe

Bové has situated Auerbach as an inescapable figure in a genealogy of what he calls critical humanism who appears at the cusp of the reiteration of the traditional humanistic paradigm and the contrary perception that "critical humanism is a situated historical practice enacted within a set of power relations" – power relations, we might add, that extend all the way from the local and institutional to the geopolitical (Bové 1984: xi). Bové's is an important insight, which clarifies a number of issues in Auerbach, including his seemingly paradoxical reception in recent years, which I alluded to at the beginning. On the one hand, Auerbach affirms the possibility that the critically engaged humanistic intellectual might yet be able to produce an encompassing survey, "an inner history of mankind" that seeks to preserve the memory of human diversity (Auerbach 1969: 4). On the other, he himself expresses

skepticism about the possibilities for such forms of historical knowledge by proposing a method that, in the final chapter of *Mimesis*, he acknowledges he owes to the narrative "method" of the modernists (Auerbach 2003: 548). His name for this method is still "synthesis," but it signifies now a practice that is more restrained, more historically self-aware of its own contingent and even ephemeral nature – hence the significance of the notion of starting-point or point of departure (*Ansatzpunkt*). The humanistic scholar, no longer capable of assimilating the sum total of the literary materials now available – Auerbach's quantitative recoding of the postcolonial reorientation of culture and knowledge – must proceed instead by locating "a point of departure, a handle, as it were, by which the subject can be seized." The point of departure "must be the election of a firmly circumscribed, easily comprehensible set of phenomena whose interpretation is a radiation out from them and which orders and interprets a greater region than they themselves occupy" (Auerbach 1969: 14). While the ultimate goal is still an understanding of the whole, this must be seen as becoming visible only in its movements, to be apprehended only once "all the particulars that make it up are grasped as essences" (Auerbach 1969: 16). Auerbach thus makes explicit the fact that *Weltliteratur* consists of a certain interplay of the universal and the particular. And philology, which is, of course, above all, a method of apprehension of (historical) particulars, becomes the privileged mental discipline for a critical humanism seeking to comprehend (the works of) humanity in history (on Auerbach's method and history, see Lerer 1996).

Repeatedly in his writing of the postwar period, Auerbach gestures toward Giambattista Vico – whom he contrasts with Herder – as a forebear for the form of historical humanism he himself was attempting to refashion for his own times. Emphasizing his situation at the margins of Europe, Auerbach (and following him, Said) extracts from Vico a materialist and radically historical humanism, with "the human" understood not as pre-given commonness of nature or experience but rather something that is achieved through social and cultural action by and between divergently situated and constituted individuals and collectivities. But Auerbach gives this humanistic (self-)consciousness of "the human" a dialectical turn. The philological humanist himself is an agent of the modernity one of whose effects is a leveling out of the heterogeneity that is the human – the very heterogeneity whose memory the philologist seeks to resurrect. And the philologist in the age of Goethe – the age, supposedly, of the "discovery" of human diversity – was as much implicated in this historical process, albeit at an earlier stage – "the period of Goethean humanism was brief indeed" – as was the philological humanist in Auerbach's own postwar, postcolonial era (Auerbach 1969: 3).

When Auerbach distinguishes his concept of *Weltliteratur* from Goethe's, he does so in part with respect to the question of the efficacy of culture. There are two related questions here, first, that the cultivation of "culture" does not lead progressively to the "refinement" of values in society at large, and, second, that an actualization of cosmopolitanism – that is, of the liberal notion of the possibility of humanity inhabiting the earth as a single, non-antagonistic entity – is not an inevitable outcome of human history (Auerbach 1969: 6). At one level, this is a somewhat melancholic (and begrudging) admission of the relative powerlessness of humanistic intellectuals with respect to what they themselves might view as progress in society. At another, it

marks a chilling verdict on bourgeois German *Bildung*, and more specifically, on the German-Jewish attachment to *Bildung* as the basis for assimilation and thus for the granting of civic rights and equality, a verdict produced, of course, from *within* the history of this commitment but from the other side of the inferno. It is a rejection of the optimism of the whole Kant-Goethe-Schiller heritage and its involvement in the history of the Jewish Question in Germany (Sorkin 1987; Mosse 1993). Like *Mimesis*, therefore, as Edward Said noted with respect to that work, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" too represents an act of "cultural survival." It quietly hints at the suspicion that the growing "standardization" of world culture in the postwar years is not unconnected to the extermination, during the war, of the forms of difference embodied in the Jewish cultures and populations of Europe. Thus we might say that Auerbach's refashioning of *Weltliteratur* is conceived from the standpoint of catastrophe rather than the perspective of a triumphal and supposedly inevitable march onward to the actualization of humanity.

It is this problematic location, of course, that assures that the essay's characteristic affect would be that of pathos, the pathos of survival. Auerbach's essay thus finds no place within the positivistic strain in the *Begriffsgeschichte* or conceptual history of *Weltliteratur*, so that it is no accident, for instance, that it does not make an appearance in Franco Moretti's much-cited essay of some years ago on world literature (Moretti 2000; Arac 2002). Moretti is seeking to describe literature as a global system alongside the systematic world economy postulated by world systems theory, whereas Auerbach's interest is in a historical human potentiality and the knowledge forms that correspond to it. It is possible therefore that *world literature* in English still carries a different set of significations than *Weltliteratur* in German. (Hence the appropriateness of Said's leaving the word in the original in his English translation of Auerbach's essay.) At the very least, we should not forget that the English term is a *translation* of the German, and thus be alert to the complexities (and the politics) of that translation in each instance. It is thus not the political viewpoint per se that separates Moretti from Auerbach, but rather an understanding of the nature of humanistic scholarship and its relationship to the reproduction of dominant groups and social relations. And Said, the presumed "postcolonial" intellectual of Palestinian origin, stands much closer to Auerbach in this sense, but with him Auerbach's "historical humanism" stands radically reformulated.

## Criticism, philology, exile

Despite Auerbach's variously expressed conservative tendencies – the recurring relapse into subjectivist notions of intuition, individual genius, or creativity, the effort to shore up and re-authorize the edifice of European humanism once it had been put radically into question by the great historical events of the twentieth century, and more broadly the sense of loss that infuses his account of historical transformations in the twentieth century – both Said and Bové consider him an exemplary figure of what it means to inculcate a critical consciousness. This judgment does not rest simply on a form–content, or method–viewpoint, separation. On the contrary, the "contents" of Auerbachian philological humanism are themselves

at stake in it. As Bové notes, "even though his project is somewhat too pessimistic and abstract in its objects and methods, Auerbach does point to at least two necessities for contemporary scholarship: to write a discontinuous history as engaged history of the present and to bring the skills of rational, scholarly inquiry to bear on the present social and political conditions out of which all cultural and intellectual discourse emerges" (Bové 1984: 208). Said posits this mode of engagement with the present and with the possibility of historical transformation against both the formal vacuity of the Anglo-American New Criticism that was contemporary with Auerbach's arrival – in both senses – in America and the guild-like self-referentiality of the Theory that replaced it institutionally (Said 1983; on Auerbach in America, see Levin 1969 and Kadir 2011).

Auerbach views philology as the quintessential science of the historical – that is, the secular, human, earthly – world, insisting as it does on a historical understanding of the creation of meaning in language. (In that sense, we might say that its status in the humanistic disciplines is for him analogous to that of mathematics in the natural sciences.) Thus only philology can equip us to escape the near-certain advent of modernity's historical amnesia. But since philology is, in an immediate sense, a science of particulars, what would it mean to engage in the philology of *world* literature? What, concretely, does it mean to say, as Auerbach does, that "our philological home is the earth; it can no longer be the nation" (Auerbach 1969: 17)? This is perhaps one of the more elusive aspects of Auerbach's essay, but it seems possible to make a few observations about it. First of all, as we have already seen, since the materials available to the philologist have expanded exponentially – once again, this is Auerbach's recoding of the loss of centrality of the Western literatures, and the Romance literatures in particular – the perspectivism of the *Ansatzpunkt* becomes the means to a new kind of synthesis, a self-consciously partial and "discontinuous history" (Bové, see above) that seeks to establish *contingently* its own archive across borders and boundaries – of language, nation, continent, civilization, and tradition. Thus the scholar must not only seek mastery of a body of material, but must perform an act of imagination that allows for the material to be arranged in novel and unprecedented ways that help to shift the parameters of understanding. In this sense, "the philology of *Weltliteratur*" is a repudiation of the fragmentation of the humanities into micro-specializations and an attempt to restore the possibility of their engagement with the state of the world and with their own conditions of possibility. (We should note that Said and his co-translator rendered the genitive form of the title in German not into the genitive form in English – "of" – but rather through the conjunction "and," attempting, it seems, to accentuate both nouns equally, an effect not quite possible with the genitive in English.)

Second, and this follows from Auerbach's distinct perspectivism, the possibility of a philology of *Weltliteratur* implies certain psycho-social orientations. Commenting on Hugh of St. Victor's remarks about the "perfect" human being's detachment from any particular place in the world, Auerbach adds that Hugh "intended these lines for one whose aim is to free himself from a love of the world. But it is a good way also for one who wishes to earn a proper love for the world" (Auerbach 1969: 17). To embrace – "to earn a proper love for" – the whole world also implies continuously separating oneself from every "place" within it, from its symbolic

fabrications. This is a recipe, in other words, neither for a brooding solipsism, whether communal or individual, nor for the cosmopolitan detachment of a "view from above." Auerbach has thus already taken a significant step away from notions of an organic link between a language and a people that is a feature of philology in the era of nationalisms and nation-states. It is this initial turn that Said takes as his own point of departure and site of engagement with Auerbach. For Said, therefore, the most interesting question posed by the figure of "Auerbach in Istanbul" (Mufti 1998) is how "exile become[s] converted from a challenge or a risk, or even from an active impingement on his European selfhood, into a positive mission, whose success would be a cultural act of great importance" (Said 1983: 6–7). One possible genealogy of Said's requirement of "worldliness" for criticism – an attentiveness to the dense fabric of society and vigilant skepticism toward any claim about an organic, enclosed, and exclusive communal life – thus leads to Auerbach. For the *world* in world literature is to be understood as horizon, ever receding but legible in the "works" that are the material of the humanities.

It is doubtless the case that Auerbach cannot quite envision a concept of *Weltliteratur* in which a certain narrative of European development does not perform an anchoring function. But we do not need him to do that work of displacement for us. Auerbach's interest for us is in part precisely due to the fact of his immersion – complex, contradictory, and unresolved – in the imperial geographies of our postcolonial world, from a location that is neither entirely that of the central European mandarin intelligentsia nor that of the stateless pariah in the "age of genocide" (Knox and Kushner 1999). He appears in a transitional moment, as this world begins to come into view, and his definition of "philology" – that is, of the critical-historical humanities – as a "homeless" cultural orientation, standing athwart any attempt to settle the question of language and culture, remains as pertinent today as it was when it was first formulated. Echoing Auerbach's interpretation of Dante as "poet of the earthly world," Said sees Auerbach as a paragon of secular criticism, of a critical practice alert to the reification or freezing of any historically dynamic forms and the human relations that have produced them. The perception that Auerbach attributes to modernist narrative – "Life has always long since begun, and it is always still going on" – could, in a way, also be viewed as the governing idea for his practice of the philology of *Weltliteratur*.

As we have seen, *Weltliteratur* has, since its first emergence, been involved in the question of human "diversity," of the human *as* historical diversity. It arose in the midst of the larger imperial process of the production and management of diversity, and it appears to resurface from time to time at critical moments in the history of the modern, bourgeois world in which precisely the range of human experience comes yet again to be at stake. As a mode of critical thinking, world literature is, or ought to be, an effort to examine this history and its sedimentations into our own times.

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# 9
# QIAN ZHONGSHU AS COMPARATIST

*Zhang Longxi*

The name of Qian Zhongshu (or Ch'ien Chung-shu in the Wade-Giles system) should have been familiar to literary scholars in the international communities. He was made an honorary member of the Modern Language Association of America in 1985, but compared with the other MLA honorary members of the same year – Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, Gérard Genette, Wolfgang Iser, and Robert Weimann – Qian Zhongshu remains largely unknown in the West except in a small circle of Sinologists. Qian's scholarship belongs not just to China studies, however, but is truly comparative and global, with extensive references to world literature and culture. "His knowledge of Chinese literature, of the Western tradition, and of world literature is immense (*Sa connaissance de la littérature chinoise, du patrimoine occidental, de la littérature universelle, est prodigieuse*)," says Pierre Rickmans in *Le Monde* as early as 1983. "There is no one like Qian Zhongshu today in China, not even in the world (*Qian Zhongshu n'a pas son pareil aujourd'hui en Chine et même dans le monde*)" (Rickmans 1983: 15). But not until 1998 do we have Ronald Egan's selected English translation of Qian's major work, *Guan zhui bian* or *Limited Views*, and so far there has been very little critical assessment of Qian's scholarship to give it the credit and appreciation it deserves. Now that we are embracing a truly global concept of world literature beyond the familiar grounds of the European tradition, we should know what a great comparatist and humanist Qian Zhongshu was and how exemplary and significant his works are for anyone interested in world literature and East–West comparative studies.

Qian Zhongshu (1910–98) may be said to represent the best of humanistic scholarship in twentieth-century China, a scholarship deeply entrenched in the tradition of more than three thousand years of Chinese culture, on the one hand, and, on the other, profoundly influenced by the culture of the West. This is already discernible in his family background and upbringing. He was born into an intellectual family in Wuxi, a city near Shanghai, where his father was a well-known scholar of traditional Chinese literature who gave him a solid training in classical Chinese; the high schools he went to were established by Episcopal missionaries, where he gained an excellent command of English. After China's defeat in the Opium Wars in the late nineteenth century, most Chinese painfully realized that the world was no longer the

traditional Sinocentric "all under heaven," in which China stood at the centre and the rest were peripheries of less cultured barbarians; instead, they found a much larger and completely different world, in which the presence of Western powers posed a threat to be reckoned with, but also a model to emulate and learn from. Translation of Western works thus emerged at the turn of the century as an important intellectual activity. Yan Fu (1854–1921), who studied at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich, England, in the late 1870s, became most influential for his translation of major works on European political and social theory. Equally significant and influential were Lin Shu's (1852–1924) translations of more than 180 European and American novels into classical Chinese, even though Lin himself knew no foreign language and had to work with collaborators knowledgeable in the originals.

As a school boy, Qian Zhongshu ravenously read dozens of those novels, which he described many years later as his "great discovery at the age of eleven or twelve" that led him to a completely new world outside the familiar world of traditional Chinese literature. In reading Lin's translations, says Qian, "I came to know that Western novels could be so fascinating! I was never tired of reading Rider Haggard, Dickens, Washington Irving, Scott, and Swift time and again. If I had any conscious motivations for learning English at the time, one of them was that one day I could indulge myself in reading all the adventure stories by Haggard and other writers" (Qian 1985: 70). Interestingly, translation aroused his desire for the original. "Translation is meant to save people the trouble of learning foreign languages and reading the originals," says Qian, "but all of a sudden it may change to tempt some to learn foreign languages and read works in the original. It may stir their curiosity and make them long for the original, as if whetting their appetite with a tasty morsel without satisfying their hunger and craving." Goethe, in his *Maximen und Reflexionen*, he goes on to add, "compared translators rather impolitely to lowly and pushy matchmakers (*Übersetzer sind als geschäftige Kuppler anzusehen*)," who "show a half-concealed beauty (*eine halbverschleierte Schöne*) of the original, leaving readers desperate to see the beauty in their fevered imagination" (Qian 1985: 68–69). Translation, he argues, may "entice" readers to the original, and that was what Lin Shu's translation did to him.

Qian Zhongshu studied English at Tsinghua University in Beijing and Exeter College, Oxford, where he earned his B. Litt. degree in 1937 with a thesis on China in the English literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He went on to Paris and studied at the Sorbonne for another year before returning to China in 1938. By that time, the Japanese had invaded China and occupied Shanghai and much of the northern territories. Qian could hardly find a peaceful environment for his scholarly pursuits during the Sino-Japanese war and then the civil war between the Kuomingtang and the Communists, but he managed to teach in several universities and started to publish. *Written on the Margins of Life*, a collection of essays, came out in 1941, followed by *Men, Beasts, and Ghosts*, a collection of short stories, in 1946, and *Fortress Besieged*, his only novel, in 1947, considered by many as the finest modern Chinese fiction, as C.T. Hsia remarks, "for its delightful portrayal of contemporary manners, its comic exuberance, and its tragic insight" (Hsia 1971: 434). While those literary works were written in the modern vernacular, Qian published a book of criticism in classical Chinese, *Tan yi lu* or *Discourses on the Art of Literature*, in 1948. It is an early example of his scholarship that draws on incredibly rich

Chinese and European textual sources for comparisons, intertextual connections, and mutual illuminations.

*Discourses on the Art of Literature* appears to be a fairly traditional book, as it is written in classical Chinese and follows the traditional form of *shi hua* (remarks on poetry) or *bi ji* (written notes), in which fairly short entries are loosely put together without a particular order or consistent argument. But actually it is a completely new book in modern scholarship, for no traditional book has ever had such a wide range of reference to situate Chinese literature in the context of world literature, with quotations not just in Chinese, but in five or six European languages. In reaching out to the West, Qian Zhongshu consciously positions himself in an intellectual genealogy that dates back to the late sixteenth century, when Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and the other Jesuit missionaries came to China and started the intellectual contacts between China and Europe. The neo-Confucian thinker Lu Xiangshan (1139–92) famously said that "there are sages emerging from the eastern sea with the same mind and principles; and there are sages emerging from the western sea with the same mind and principles" (Lu 1992:317). Because of the universalistic idea articulated here with reference to "the eastern sea" and "the western sea," these words have often been cited to justify the acceptance of new ideas from the West ever since Ricci's time. Qian Zhongshu is alluding to these words when he declares, in the preface to the *Discourses*, that "from the eastern sea to the western sea, the minds and principles are the same; in the teachings of the south and the north, the way and the means are not separate" (Qian 1984: 1). This effectively lays down the foundation of East–West comparative studies buttressed by a traditional philosophical argument, thereby demonstrating that in assimilating ideas from the West, Chinese scholars follow an intellectual genealogy of their own, rather than just acting upon a desire to emulate the West.

The *Discourses* contains discussions of Chinese poetry since the Tang and the Song dynasties, often through a dialogue of classical Chinese texts with those in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, or Latin. For example, it is a conventional view among Chinese historians that different genres arise and develop in different dynasties, and thus poetry became perfected in the Tang, *ci* or lyric poetry emerged in the Song, followed by the rise of drama in the Yuan and Ming, etc. Qian Zhongshu criticizes such a view for its simplification of complex historical continuities and transformations, and he concludes that "the way literature evolves and develops is nothing but taking what was not literary to be literary, and taking what was prosaic to be poetic. What used to be considered not suitable for literature is admitted as stuff for literature, and what used to be considered vulgar expressions are taken to be materials for the weaving of an elegant text" (Qian 1984: 29–30). The great Tang writer Han Yu (768–824) is particularly noted for turning phrases fit for prose into innovative poetic expressions.

In discussing Han Yu's use of prose in poetry, Qian opens the question up, relating it to a more general discussion of world literature. He points out the same tendency in William Wordsworth, who in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* dismissed "poetic diction" in favor of ordinary language; in Victor Hugo, who in his preface to *Les Orientales* argued that anything can be a suitable literary subject (*Tout est sujet*); and in Friedrich Schlegel, who in *Athenäumfragmente*, no. 116, considered poetry as

the culmination of all forms, "a progressive universal poetry (*eine progressive Universalpoesie*)." Then, as a rule in all literary histories, Qian reminds us with Victor Schklovsky that "New forms are simply canonization of inferior genres" (Qian 1984: 34–35). By putting Han Yu in comparison with Wordsworth, Hugo, and Schlegel, and by referring to Schklovsky's theoretical summing-up, Qian Zhongshu makes it clear that the development of literary genres and the changing concept of literature is a process of constant expansion, the assimilation of elements of prose into poetry, and the integration of what was considered non-literary into the sphere of literature. What, within the limits of Chinese literature, is taken to be a particular feature, even a feature of a particular writer, is thus better understood as an exemplification of a general tendency in world literature, even of a rule or principle in the history of literature.

It is worth noting that Qian Zhongshu cited Schklovsky in 1948, some twenty years before Russian Formalism and Schklovsky became well known among Western literary scholars. Qian was extremely well read and had an acute sense of what was new and important in the world of literature and criticism, but just as he was reaching the prime of his creativity as a writer and critic, the political situation in China changed, and for several decades incessant campaigns against intellectuals and increasingly tight ideological controls under Mao's rule made it impossible for him to continue writing. He was not the only one, however. Shen Congwen (1902–88), one of the best and most prolific writers in modern China, who had published dozens of novels and short stories and cut a very prominent figure in the 1930s and the 1940s, suddenly stopped writing and never published a single work of fiction after 1949. Those who did write in Mao's China were constantly subjected to critique, humiliation, and even worse treatment. From the 1950s till the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1977, Qian Zhongshu kept a very low profile and published almost nothing. In more than thirty years, as he told this author in a private communication, "of all the planned works, not one out of ten was completed" (Zhang 2004: 223). Such was the condition for most intellectuals in Mao's China.

In post-Mao China, however, things changed dramatically. In 1979, *Limited Views*, Qian's magnum opus written under difficult conditions during the Cultural Revolution, was published and won immediate critical acclaim. *Fortress Besieged* was republished in 1980 and made into a successful television serial in 1990, which made Qian Zhongshu a household name in China far beyond intellectual circles. The second and enlarged edition of *Discourses on the Art of Literature* was published in 1984, and the *Collection of Seven Essays* came out in 1985. Qian Zhongshu was "rediscovered" and became the object of a wave of "Qian studies." Forty years after his return to China from Europe, he was allowed to join Chinese delegations and visited America (1979) and Japan (1980), and was made a Vice President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1982. As he wrote to this author in a letter dated 28 June 1982, to be placed in such an office was something he "never dreamed of," which he described in a self-mocking tone, deliberately misquoting Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*, II.v): "Some are born mandarins, some become mandarins, some have mandarinate thrust upon them" (Zhang 2004: 231).

Fame and prestige came to him in his old age, but Qian Zhongshu stubbornly refused to be lionized. He urged his readers not to make *Fortress Besieged* the subject of critical studies, and turned down invitations to interviews or television

appearances. As his wife, Yang Jiang, recalled in her memoir, he even told an English lady rather bluntly, when she telephoned to request an interview: "If you ate an egg and thought it was good, why do you have to see the hen that laid the egg?" (Yang 1987: 102). What he wanted was time, to be left alone and do his work, for the five volumes of the *Limited Views* are only part of a much larger work he had planned, which, unfortunately, he never had time enough to bring to completion. Qian Zhongshu passed away in December 1998, and his unfinished manuscripts and notes were later published in their original, unedited form as facsimile reproductions.

Despite its modest title, *Limited Views* is an ambitious work commenting on Chinese classics in relation to various Western texts. It is written in classical Chinese, like the earlier *Discourses*, but on a much larger scale and covers not only literature, but also philosophy, history, philology, psychology, linguistics, and many other subjects. It evinces the author's encyclopedic knowledge and offers an excellent model for Chinese–Western comparative studies. The very first entry, a commentary on the meaning of *yi* in the title of the great Chinese classic *Yi jing* (or *I Ching*, often translated as the *Book of Changes*), lays a new foundation for East–West comparative studies. Qian begins by quoting an ancient book and observes that the Han-dynasty commentator Zheng Xuan (127–200) explained that "the word *yi* has one name but three meanings: first, 'easy,' second, 'change,' and third, 'not change.'" Of the three meanings, two are contradictory. He then cites other Confucian and Buddhist books to show that several other words, such as *shi* or poetry, *lun* as in *Lun yu* or the Confucian *Analects*, *wang* or king, and *ying* or response, all have different and sometimes contradictory meanings. Then, he turns the discussion of Chinese semantics to a wider context and says:

> Hegel once denigrated our language and thought it unfit for philosophizing (*Wissenschaft der Logik*, Reclams "Universal-Bibliothek", I, 19); while he praised the German language as suitable for expressing the subtlety of metaphysical meanings, as exemplified by the word *Aufheben* that contains in one and the same word two contradictory meanings (*ein und desselbe Wort für zwei entgegengesetzte Bestimmungen*), which, he claimed, not even Latin has a word to match in depth and subtlety (Ibid., 124–25). We need not blame Hegel for his ignorance of the Chinese language; neither should we be surprised at his careless high-sounding argument based on such ignorance, for that is not uncommon with those learned master-savants; but as scholars we do feel it a shame that he has turned what is the same in minds and principles from the eastern sea to the western sea into the proverbial incomparable apples and oranges.
>
> (Qian 1986: 1–2)

To refute Hegel's East–West dichotomy is crucial for the legitimacy of cross-cultural studies; therefore the discussion of the bisemy of words with contradictory meanings at the very beginning of *Limited Views* makes a strategic point.

In arguing for the similarities or affinities between different cultures, Qian's method is always concrete and textual, for he always begins with a particular quotation from a Chinese classic and proceeds by bringing in quotations from other texts,

both Chinese and Western. The wealth of quotations not only shows intertextual connections, but also points toward some basic phenomenon or general tendency in the various aspects of human life and the human world. For example, in commenting on the beginning verses of *Dao de jing* or the *Laozi* – "The *tao* that can be spoken of is not the constant *tao*; the name that can be named is not the constant name," – Qian points out that the inadequacy of language is a basic question shared by philosophers, mystics, and poets everywhere. The Tang poet Liu Yuxi (772–842) laments in a famous couplet: "How often I regret that words are too shallow / Ever to reach the depth of human feelings!" This is not a problem limited to feelings of love, says Qian:

> Language serves our mind and intent, but also becomes an impediment. So some say that the language philosophers attempt to use originated in the cries of monkeys and dogs (*le cri perfectionné des singes et des chiens* [A. France, *Le Jardin d'Epicure*, *Oeuvres complètes*, Calmann-Lévy, IX, 430–31]); and some claim that it is as sly as a snake (*der Schlangenbetrug der Sprache* [Hamann, quoted in F. Mauthner, *Kritik der Sprache*, 3. Aufl., I, 335; II, 718]), against which scholars are always on the alert … Philosophers insightful as Hegel or radical as Nietzsche blame language for expressing the inner both too much and too little (*daß diese Äußerungen das Innere zu sehr, als daß sie es zu wenig ausdrücken* [Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 229]), or despise it as something vulgar and "vulgarizing," designed for the ordinary and the mediocre (*Die Sprache ist nur für Durchschnittliches, Mittleres, Mitteilsames erfunden. Mit der Sprache vulgarisiert bereits der Sprechende* [Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung*, "Streifzüges eines Unzeitgemässen," §26, *Werke*, hrsg. K. Schlechta, II, 1005]).
>
> (Qian 1986: 406–7)

The mystics are the most radical in the critique of language. That which Zhuangzi regards as what "cannot be talked about in language and cannot be sensed by intent," says Qian, is what Buddha indicates in a *gatha* in the second chapter of the *Saddharma-pundarîka-sutra*, saying "Stop, no need to speak! My dharma is wondrously beyond thinking." By referring to the Buddhist expression of "the divinely silent," and Western mystic expressions of "*das heilige Schweigen* (Mauthner, *op. cit.*, I, 81–82, 117–20)," "*die Stummen des Himmels* (Ibid.: III, 617–18)," and "*sanctum silentium* (M. Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, 63)," Qian remarks that mystics East and West almost sound as though they were translating one another (Qian 1986: 408).

As Qian Zhongshu's argument takes the form of "written notes" and does not develop into a systematic proposition or a theory, it is difficult to summarize its content, but its richness lies precisely in the textual details of the content. Such a form "is a venerable one in traditional Chinese letters," as Ronald Egan observes. "It has given writers the opportunity to record their reflections or scholarly insights free of any commitment to a full-scale classical exegesis or, for that matter, to any elaborate and rigorously consistent intellectual stance" (Egan 1998: 12). For readers who are accustomed to be led by logical connections and the conventional protocols

of an academic discipline, however, it may seem waywardly exuberant, even disorientating. But, as I have said elsewhere, "once we surrender our usual expectation of a linear argument and let ourselves be guided by the seemingly erratic turns of a great mind, Qian's erudition, the dazzling brilliance of his insights, the apposite quotations, the revelation of deep affinities and connection of ideas in a wealth of texts, and the knowledge and wisdom released from ancient works through his commentaries will reward us with a special kind of pleasure, a deep sense of intellectual gratification" (Zhang 1999: 98).

Qian Zhongshu does, however, have some critical essays written in modern vernacular with more consistently developed arguments. The essay "Chinese Poetry and Chinese Painting," for example, points out the different criteria in Chinese criticism on poetry and painting despite the often-encountered but misleading view that they share the same origin and are not just "sister arts," but "twin sisters." That view is quite similar to conventional views in the West, says Qian, for "the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos says that 'painting is mute poetry and poetry is speaking picture.' In a book on rhetoric attributed to Cicero, the fourth example of *commutatio* has it that 'Just as poetry is speaking picture, painting should be silent poetry' (*Item poema loquens pictura, pictura tacitum poema debet esse*). Leonardo da Vinci simply claims that painting is 'a dumb poem' (*una poesia muta*), while poetry is 'a blind picture' (*una pittura cieca*)" (Qian 1985: 5). The idea of sister arts, says Qian, "is a foundation-stone for classical Western theories of arts, but it is also a stumbling-block that Gotthold Lessing wanted to remove, for he saw poetry and painting as very different in features and clothing, not jealous sisters (*keine eifersüchtige Schwester*)" (Qian 1985: 6). In "Reading *Laokoön*," which continues the discussion by putting Lessing's famous work in comparison with numerous Chinese texts, Qian not only shows how Lessing's ideas were adumbrated by the ancient Chinese, albeit unsystematically, but also highlights Lessing's major contribution – the idea of the *Augenblick*, the "pregnant moment" that presages the imminent climax. Lessing's *Augenblick*, says Qian, "though meant to theorize about fine arts, unwittingly offers a useful concept for the literary art as well" (Qian 1985: 48). Qian's essay thus extends the validity of Lessing's theory to a much broader area of the art of narrative literature.

Another important essay discusses the idea that works of literature that speak of pain and sorrow are likely to be most effective and most appreciated. That idea, says Qian, "is not only a commonplace in literary theories in ancient China, but a convention in the practice of writing" (Qian 1985: 102). The historian Sima Qian (145?–190? BCE) is probably the first to articulate that idea in China, and the literary critic Liu Xie (465?–522) gives it an intriguing metaphorical expression when he speaks of a writer's works as "pearls produced by a sick oyster," a metaphor Qian also finds in Franz Grillparzer, Flaubert, Heine, and A.E. Housman (Qian 1985: 103–4). In *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, 4:13, Qian observes, "Nietzsche treats the cackle of a hen and the singing of a poet as the same, both are 'out of pain' (*Der Schmerz macht Huhner und Dichter gackern*)" (Qian 1985: 102). Freud famously considers art as "a substitute for unfulfilled wishes (*Ersatz für den Triebverzicht*) and satisfaction in fantasies (*Phantasiebefriedgungen*)" (Qian 1985: 106). With quotations from Shelley ("*Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts*") to Justinus Kerner ("*und es kommt das echte Lied / Einzig aus dem Menschenherzen, / Das ein tiefes Leid durchgluht*"), to Musset ("*Les plus déséspérés sont*

*les chants les plus beaux, / Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs sanglots*"), and of course a great number of Chinese textual examples, Qian Zhongshu makes a convincing case that literature gives full vent to pain or suffering. At the end of the essay, Qian makes a plea for interdisciplinarity and a broad vision beyond narrowly defined fields. In describing "poetry gives vent to grievances" as a literary concept in ancient China, he relates it to similar views in the modern West. "That is quite natural," says Qian:

> When we speak of the West and the modern times, we may also unwittingly touch on China and the ancient times. Objects of humanistic studies are connected with one another and can mutually illuminate, not only crossing boundaries of nations and time periods, but running through different fields and disciplines. Because of the severe limitations of our lives and intellect, we can only reduce our research areas in increasingly narrower circles and divide our specialties into increasingly smaller subfields. That is for the sake of convenience and we have no other choice. Therefore, to become a specialist in a particular field, even though subjectively one may feel proud of it, is objectively something one cannot help but have to live with.
>
> (Qian 1985: 113)

The deflation of the pride of a "specialist" reminds us of the importance of being humble vis-à-vis what we do not know, while opening up our mind to a broader horizon beyond what we do know. Qian Zhongshu's encyclopedic knowledge is difficult for anyone to match, but his exemplary works will always inspire and encourage us to reach higher, to go beyond narrowly defined fields and disciplines, to face the challenge of what is new and unfamiliar, and also to embrace the possibility of discoveries and insights, the hope of becoming a true comparatist, a lover of the wonders of world literature.

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# 10
# RENÉ ETIEMBLE
## Defense and illustration of a "true literary comparatism"

*Samira Sayeh*

Active across much of the twentieth century, René Etiemble (1909–2002) is famous for being a prolific French writer and researcher, a passionate and free academic mind, and a committed and dedicated linguist. A connoisseur of fifteen languages and a fierce advocate of world literature, he is best known for his work on Chinese literature, culture and philosophy, which he used extensively to illustrate what real comparative analysis in the humanities should be. His eclectic knowledge and curiosity led him to introduce the French and Francophone publics to the thought and literatures of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa via translations, major scientific essays, and creative work.

Etiemble's contribution to the field of comparative literature can hardly be overstated. His 1952 *Le Mythe de Rimbaud* already perfectly revealed his future intellectual orientations. Focusing on the critical reception of Rimbaud, he reveals how this world-famous nineteenth-century French author was read, interpreted, and mythified in accordance with differing cultural and literary traditions, and different peoples and the knowledge and ideas about France and French literature. Because he was fascinated by Asian philosophy, and had a passion for world literatures, Etiemble devoted his entire career to defending and illustrating what he would call "a true literary comparatism." His contemporary defense of comparative literature cannot be seen separate from his uncompromising fidelity to the principles and values of the French Enlightenment, whose spirit of rebellion he embodied. His tireless propagation of what he called *littérature universelle* – Goethe's *Weltliteratur* – makes of him a key figure in the post-World War II development of literary studies in France (*Quelques essais de littérature universelle* 1982; *Nouveaux essais de littérature universelle* 1992). He is credited with having renovated comparative literature in France after World War II. A life-long intellectual dissident and non-conformist, Etiemble argued for the replacement of what he considered an inaccessible and passive academic discipline by an active and world-oriented influential humanistic discipline, open to all cultures and literatures.

## *"Et nunc erudimini"* – "Are we comparatists or not?"

It is difficult to describe Etiemble in a few words because of his intellectual eclecticism, the intricacy of his thoughts, and his often exuberant vocabulary. One of his studies on world literature, though, *Ouverture(s) sur un comparatisme planétaire* (1988), offers an accurate portrayal of what he himself saw as his intellectual mission. It reveals how militant and international a comparatist and humanist he was, and it may serve as starting point for a better grasp of both the man and the academic, and also of his intellectual vocation and his mission to further what Adrian Marino (1982) calls a "militant comparatism." As Etiemble describes his project in the *Ouverture(s)* and looks down on the sporadic usage of the English language in a French text, quoting the opening sentences in translation will be useful to get a better grasp of the man and his work:

> If I were to degrade myself and write French according to the criteria to which Hagège has been won over, I would entitle this book:
>
> THE POST-ETIEMBLE ERA OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
>
> since the newspaper from our unemploied (sic) [*chomeur* (*sic*)] and pricarious workers (sic) [*precaires* (*sic*)] is bleakly entitled *CASH* and not *CACHE* [French spelling], or even better, money [*FRIC*]. I would be allowed to belittle myself thanks to another support, and that one is of quality, since the phrase is borrowed from Gloria Bien [ … ] *Et nunc eradimini* (are we comparatists or not? Have we studied some foreign languages?): here is the complete text: "In this post-Etiemble era of comparative literature, one need not be a lunatic to go from here and speculate on various theories of universal correspondences;" in other and bad words, since I will try to say it in good French, indeed good-humored [ … ]; in spite of my colleagues' resistance, that is precisely what I persist in considering as one of the most propitious discoveries in real comparative analysis: Theory of Invariants. But that certainly does not mean that Invariants only ought to be regarded in comparative literature; indeed, a comparatist is cut out for the job if he can not transcend particularisms and chauvinisms, and look out in four or five literatures which had not been historically related, for what they have in common: the human element.
>
> (9–10)

This passage encapsulates the essence of Etiemble's uncompromising ideas for a reformed and true comparatism in literature departments. In addition, nonchalantly reminding his readers of the fierce struggle he has endured with resilient French fellow scholars, the author makes the most of this introductory passage in order to squeeze in a few remarks in support of his approach. Informative enough of his ideology and concerns, the quotation also enlightens, just when needed, the author's mental power, and his legendary witty and sophisticated sense of humor, which earned him the irritation of his conservative European colleagues.

### *Harrowing a controversial scholar*

As influential as Etiemble's works are today, they were once boycotted and shunned by his contemporaries. Etiemble's encyclopedic knowledge and his impulsive and rash desire for justice and equality irritated more than one scholar. His superior powers of reasoning and his serious questioning of cultural relativism, along with his contributions to the field of comparative literature, allow us to consider him one of the greatest post-World War II French minds. Etiemble would perhaps rather call himself an academic nuisance, *l'emmerdeur*, as in his *Propos d'un emmerdeur* (1994). Intellectually versatile, he often defended seemingly opposite positions, rendering his protests obscure and intricate to the general public. Etiemble's glorification of *la langue de Molière* and his purist and uncompromising demands for linguistic accuracy stirred numerous disputes, and earned him the reputation of being a French chauvinist. Such accusations need to be addressed because "chauvinism" is precisely a mind-set Etiemble fought against his entire life in order to promote a true comparatism in literary and cultural studies. So how could an anti-chauvinist intellectual be so wrongly accused of chauvinism?

Etiemble's *Parlez-vous franglais?* (1964) is at the heart of the matter. In this essay the author expresses his intransigence toward the sloppy use of the French language, which he fiercely defends, upholding the purity of the right word and the right meaning. Such a traditionalist stand re-enacting Du Bellay's *Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francoyse* (1549) might mislead an uninformed reader to indict Etiemble for xenophobia.

A purist, Etiemble took pride in the French language and fought fervently to make himself heard. Journalistic accounts of his work – in such mainstream publications as *Time* magazine in the USA – often reduced his views to a mere expression of jingoism, whereas Etiemble is simply trying to explain that the cosmopolitanism he is advocating certainly should not be meant to condone the corruption of language, let alone call the statelessness of people.

Etiemble stood militantly against the abusive use of words devoid of meaning, a practice which, he claimed his entire life, is at the very heart of the scourge of our modern world. Etiemble also settles up with the political, economic, and social perversions of international affairs and relations. He is convinced that misinterpretation of the true meaning of words and thoughts results in contempt and in the promotion of moral and political corruption (*De la précision du vocabulaire*, 1968: 114), hence the need for learning foreign languages and encouraging faithful literary translations. In order to clear himself of the accusation of being an idealist taking a hard line with his fellow literature scholars, Etiemble calls for freedom of thought and fully accepts the consequences of his provocations in the face of all opposition. Indeed, one ought to remember, of Etiemble's shocking and provocative diatribes, that he would continuously assert the right to seek freedom and his personal critical thinking, regardless of the disagreement this might cause.

The accusations of chauvinism leveled at Etiemble are particularly scandalous if we pause to consider his steadfast rejection of all forms of nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism (Marino 1982: 42–81). In reference to his own country, France, and the alleged myth of superiority of the Western world, he made his point clear as early as 1953 in "Le Japonais."

Speaking about the blinkered belief that a superior European culture and expression will redeem the world, Etiemble stirs up a new controversy. In an address to his fellow European scholars, he looks into the past and future of humankind: Western restrictions to national and regional chauvinisms resulted in the erection of virtual barriers between a civilized European culture acting as a model for "universality," and the rest of the world that ought to align itself with this universality. Questioning the European contribution to humanity, he refutes received ideas and does not refrain from clashing with long-standing hierarchies, reversing the Western traditional, one-sided view of the world.

As an anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist, Etiemble is also an anti-nationalist whose major struggle consisted in fighting against the superiority complex and literary hermetism of the French reader – and of the European at large. Deploring their lack of interest in other peoples, and their reluctance to explore or simply respect other peoples, cultures, and systems of thought as displayed in the world's many literatures, he goes as far as to question the ongoing efficacy of the great French tradition. But, Etiemble's reproach of a French and European cultural nationalism and isolationism should not be construed as a blunt rejection of the concept of nationalism per se. Etiemble believes that it is through the expression of self and the respect for a national identity that one can learn how to open up to the rest of the world and to value different cultures. It is vital to have a healthy preservation and fondness for one's own national cultural heritage and language, and these should constitute a first step toward the attainment of a universal culture and order.

## Did you say universal?

A fierce defender of the concept of the universality of culture and civilization, Etiemble predicted the disastrous and inevitable loss of past and present non-European cultural heritages, if their literatures were not brought to the fore on a par with the then dominant literatures of the Western hemisphere. Faced with the inward-looking French academic structures, and the traditional and steadfast European belief in Western superiority, Etiemble campaigned in works such as his *Essais de littérature (vraiment) générale* (1974) and *Nouveaux essais* against the existing canons of literature and thought, and advocated the right of people to think, write, and behave differently. By calling for a higher valuation of non-European authors, he reminded his contemporaries that comparative literature was conceived as a science for the future of humankind. As such, he felt the discipline was worldly enough to address historical and contemporary cultural, political, linguistic, social, and economic issues, and aimed to reach as wide an audience as possible.

For Etiemble, European, and particularly French, resistance to a global perspective could be traced to academia, and to the Western conception of "comparatism" and "universality." Sadly enough, Etiemble's remarks to some extent still ring true in an age of globalization, when a homogenization of the world along European standards is in place (see Hayot in this volume). Non-Western cultures are still too often defined, as Etiemble noted, as "developing," "primitive," and as "Other" (*Le Péché*

*vraiment capital*, 1957: 160; *Hygiène des lettres V*, 1967: 114). Not only did Etiemble refuse to consider European literature as the measure of all literature, but he also called for its decentering and for overthrowing the self-privileging position its advocates had asserted for centuries.

Such unorthodox assertions contributed to a new misunderstanding of Etiemble. The confusion arose from the analogy made between two facts: the actual economic and military superiority of the West as central metropolis, and the existence of a variety of peoples and cultures at what was deemed the periphery. In the face of such asymmetry, Etiemble was convinced, along with anthropologists Claude Lévi-Strauss (*Race et histoire*, 1952) and Louis Massignon ("L'Occident devant l'Orient," 1952: 13–17), that one must dissociate the idea of material superiority from the thought of a supposedly superior culture. He adhered to the idea that a nation, or a people, can be seen as insignificant on a world-wide scale, politically speaking, but, in the eyes of comparative literature, he argued, they should be treated with as much importance and reverence as the most politically and economically influential nations. Thus, while Etiemble acknowledged the military, technical, and economic superiority of Europe, he saw comparative literature in the world as an equalizing platform, and the reformation of comparative literature as a "world literature" to that end as an imperative.

### *Towards a new comparatism*

Dislodging the center, Etiemble aligns all the diverse literatures of the world on a level plane. For Etiemble, European self-privileging was a provincial syndrome which he traced to Europe's academic departments of literatures, languages, and the humanities in general. He saw this as the core of the problem, and in France particularly, a French attitude that he saw as dating back to Caraccioli's *Paris, le modèle des nations étrangères, ou l'Europe française* (1776; see Buescu in this volume). As an early critic of colonialisms and imperialisms in such essays as "L'Écrivain et le colonialisme" in *Hygiène des lettres II*: *Littérature dégagée* (1955), Etiemble objected to hierarchies of literary value in world literature. In *Essais de littérature universelle* (1974), Etiemble questions the dichotomy of a literature of the masters ("une littérature des maîtres") and a literature of slaves ("une littérature d'esclaves"). (16–17)

As a world-renowned Sinologist, Etiemble developed his theories using Asian philosophy, history, and literature mainly to illustrate his point. Famous for his enthusiasm for Chinese studies already in his late teens, he pleads for a change of Western mentality and argues that the West is not the hub of the literary world. Europe should stop paying attention only to itself and look into the history and the art of lesser-known cultures. *Connaissons-nous la Chine?* (1964) and *Comment lire un roman japonais?* (1980) are two notable examples. As Etiemble's contemporary Raymond Schwab (1955: 103–4; 209) noted, Asian literature is more prolific and abundant than all of the literatures of Europe combined. Therefore, Europe should not only be introduced to Asian literatures; Europe should recognize the superiority of Oriental thought, morals, and politics dating back to the Song (around 1000 CE) or the Confucian Han dynasties (slightly prior to 0 CE) in China, especially when one

considers the state of culture in the Western world during the same periods. Projecting his message beyond the walls of his classroom, in 1958 and 1959 Etiemble published his teaching notes on the Chinese eighteenth century as *L'Orient philosophique*. In revised form he re-published them in 1989 under the provocative title *L'Europe chinoise 2* – most probably as riposte to Caraccioli's 1776 book subtitled *L'Europe française*.

But Etiemble also developed similar thoughts and attitudes towards the Arab populations of North Africa. "Barbarie ou Berbérie?" (1953) for instance, overturns the dominant western perspective of civilization by asserting that the Arabs have civilized the Western world, including the French, and not the other way around. Reminding his readers of the Arabs' contribution to the intellectual growth of the West during the Dark Ages in Europe, Etiemble calls for an acknowledgment of the erudition and sophistication that the West had inherited from its Middle Eastern neighbors for three centuries. He reminds them that the Arabs had collected and disseminated much knowledge from their travels to China and India, long before Marco Polo ever introduced his fellow Europeans to Central Asia (1082).

Indeed, Etiemble's work aims at correcting the idea that it is the West that made the world, with an acknowledgment of the no less important cultural, scientific, and philosophical contributions of the Asian, Arab, Persian, Amerindian, and African civilizations. In order to achieve this goal, he claimed, one must understand the different systems of thought by evaluating each society according to its own standards. For Etiemble, comparative literature is *the* place to promote and advance this sort of humanism. His book, *Comparaison n'est pas raison* (1963), clearly spells this out as mission for the discipline. In addition to the typical passionate and critical attitude of his, Etiemble gives detailed recommendations for institutional arrangements. Because the crisis of comparative literature is universal, in his short essay he offers a diagnosis and suggests new didactic avenues of research in order to remedy the situation. He tasks the field of comparative literature with the rediscovery of the world and the search for a new definition of the human being. Echoing Jean-Paul Sartre, for whom "existentialism is a humanism" – *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (1946) – Etiemble puts forward the idea that "comparative literature is humanism" – "la littérature comparée c'est l'humanisme" (*Comparaison*, 1963: 20–23; *Ouverture(s)*, 1988: 72–75). There, Etiemble already advocates what later critics will translate as "planetarity" (Spivak 2003).

## Heritage and legacy

If Etiemble's powerful thinking and writing result mostly from his eclectic interest and curiosity in world cultures and world literatures, his knowledge of and passion for French literature and philosophy are also obvious. A key era in French literary history is that of the Enlightenment, an epoch marked by a global awareness of literatures and cultures. Etiemble often credits his French predecessors, who saw the many countries of the world as communicating vessels. And, even though the "world" defined as the goal at the time was the Western world, the eighteenth

century's idealization of a literary European circle gave way to the ideas of a universal republic of letters and of an ideal library (see Buescu and Mani in this volume). While still imperfect and rather limited, such ideas made possible the questioning of the intellectual and moral superiority of the West. It is actually during the eighteenth century, with Voltaire, Montesquieu, Mirabeau, and others, that the most significant cultural and literary comparisons with, and philosophical reflections about, the existence of non-European civilizations were initiated. Etiemble often refers to Voltaire's, Montesquieu's, and Montaigne's ideas in order to sustain his anti-nationalist stance and reform cultural values in consideration of non-Western civilizations. The fact that he would request to be called by his last name only, instead of René Etiemble, also shows how influential those philosophers were in the forging of his intellectual identity – although Etiemble argued that the suppression of his first name is due to the detestable hiatus created by a discordant recurrence of the "é" sound in René Etiemble.

In his satirical *Lettres persanes* (1721) the philosopher and political economist Montesquieu denounced the superficial judgment and unsettling disregard of his French fellow citizens in the fortunes, cultures, and literatures of other peoples. On 17 September 1755, in a letter to "M. le Comte d'Argental," Voltaire remarks that the idea that someone would want or expect the people in Beijing to speak and think like the people in Paris was unbearable and very painful to him (882). He wished that his play *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755) had been more successful and thought provoking, contributing to the eradication of cultural prejudices (*Œuvres complètes*, *vol. 7*: 882). Etiemble reiterates the same concerns as Voltaire, and as Montesquieu, with his final question in "Lettre 30" – "Comment peut-on être Persan?" –, itself echoing the sixteenth-century French author and philosopher Michel de Montaigne's earlier humanistic comments in "Des Cannibales" and "De la coutume et de ne changer aisément une loy receüe" about the virtues of the gaze of an outsider on a given society (*Les Essais I*, XXXI and XXIII). The new comparatism for which he militates encapsulates the knowledge and theories of his predecessors and of his own contemporaries from all over the world. He questions the relativity of culture, and searches for a universal order of the world built upon reason alone. That order would entail an equal consideration and respect of world cultures, literatures, histories, and languages.

Just like his models Confucius, Montesquieu, or Ibn Sina (Avicenna), who relied heavily on the free exchange of ideas, Etiemble contributed to the formation of new generations of French scholars concerned with the eradication of all expressions of cultural chauvinism in academia, and the teaching of respect and consideration for world cultures and their artistic expressions. Throughout his life, he called for a radical rethinking and a serious revision of the academic field of comparative literature. As the latter then stood in France, to compare and contrast literatures still meant to catalog French, British, German, Spanish aesthetics and thought in their mutual influences. All other literatures were considered minor, regardless of their ancient literary traditions – or despite their modern divisions, as in the case of more recent literary developments such as "Francophone literatures."

Etiemble deplored this one-way comparatism which did not take into account the influence of lesser-known literatures on European thought. In an interview given to

the Associated Press right before French writer Jean-Marie Gustave LeClézio was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2008, Horace Engdahl, permanent secretary at the Swedish Academy, proudly declared: "Of course there is powerful literature in all big cultures, but you can't get away from the fact that Europe still is the center of the literary world … not the United States" (*Washington Post*, 1 October 2008). Though Engdahl's goal was to explain the reasons why the United States of America was not among the "main cultures" in possession of a powerful literature, the statement illustrates perfectly Etiemble's never-ending struggle. Turning their back to literatures from Africa, Asia, or the Middle-East – and the United States, obviously – the supposedly greater European cultures are still thought of as the center of the world.

Etiemble's cry was for an urgent reform of comparative studies aimed at getting rid of European cultural and literary supremacy imposed by a conservative academic system. Unlike the United States, where he found true comparatist enthusiasts (*Ouverture(s)* 1988: 7), the field of comparative literature was still going through a crisis in France. As it stood, and still might stand, French thought has been marked by a hierarchical idea of superior and inferior literatures, main- and sub-literatures, and developed and under-developed literatures. The recent manifesto "Pour une littérature-monde en français" (Lebris 2007; see Lionnet in this volume) illustrates this point.

Signed by forty-four authors writing in French, including LeClézio, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Nancy Hudson, Amin Maalouf, Alain Mabanckou, Gisèle Pineau, Lyonnel Trouillot, Abderrahman Wabéri and Edouard Glissant, the manifesto is conceived as a reaction against France's provincial syndrome and failure to consider and value non-French-born authors writing in the French language (Lebris 2007). Though the claims of the signatories were clumsily justified by putting forward a new label, "Littérature-monde en français" – an attempt to copy the long-standing notions of *Weltliteratur*, world literature, and *littérature universelle* – the ensuing protest revealed a serious crisis in the appreciation and acceptance of the existence of non-European literatures in the French language. So-called Francophone writers, in reference to their non-French origins, expressed painfully that they sensed a superiority complex among their French counterparts, literary critics, scholars, and students who would rather take (Franco-)French literature classes than be introduced to the broader Francophone world. This painful feeling associated with the broadening of the field of French arts finds expression in a contemptuous reception, often, or at best, in indifference for the authors and their writings. Despite Etiemble's historic efforts, the appreciation and consideration of a different aesthetic and conception of literature in the French language are yet to be realized in France.

In order to overcome French provincialism Etiemble not only recommended but also encouraged the proliferation of good translations from world literature, more particularly from the literatures of those countries whose languages may constitute an obstacle, such as Chinese or Arabic. Pleading for the intellectual conversion of French and European readers and scholars, he calls for a modern cosmopolitanism and a true comparatism. In order to fight against literary prejudices, Etiemble called for the teaching of respect and the appreciation of all the different forms of written

and visual expression. This should enable us to arrive at a better definition of humanity and trigger new reflection on the universality of culture. Having benefited tremendously from the knowledge distilled in the past by philosophers and humanists hailing from different backgrounds, Etiemble followed their example for an active and real internationalism in comparative literature.

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# 11
# DIONÝZ ĎURIŠIN AND A SYSTEMIC THEORY OF WORLD LITERATURE

*César Domínguez*

Rather than keeping the study of national literatures and comparative literature apart, the Slovak comparatist Dionýz Ďurišin (1929–97) advocates joining them in a single discipline, for which he coined the name "theory of interliterary process." His is a "systemic" theory because its object of research – world literature – is conceived of neither as a mechanical union of national literatures nor as a selection of "masterpieces," but as an open and changing system.

As Ďurišin himself stressed in the first section of *Sources and Systematics* (1974: 13–109), applying a systemic approach from a micro-level (the individual literary work) to a macro-level (world literature) in order to explain the historical nature of world literature represents his own synthesis of Alexander N. Veselovsky's historical poetics, Russian formalism, Jan Mukařovský's aesthetics, Felix Vodička's and Mikuláš Bakoš's functional structuralism, and Frank Wollman's comparatism. Ďurišin's contribution to this synthesis is a phenomenological approach that draws attention, on the one hand, to the shortcomings of the concepts of source and influence and, on the other hand, to the need for explaining literary mutations on all levels, including the world level.

Ďurišin called his 1992 *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (What Is World Literature?) "the first of its kind, even on a global scale" and "a synthesis of my own literary research" (1992: 196). *Čo je svetová literatúra?* is indeed the first book-length systemic study of world literature. It is also the most concise and detailed summary of Ďurišin's work on world literature since his 1967 textbook on comparative literature. *Čo je svetová literatúra?* lays out the rationale for two collective projects devoted to categories that lie between national and world literature. The first project (*Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá*) deals with "interliterary communities" and offers an alternative to the comparative histories sponsored by the Gorki Institute in Moscow and the ICLA Coordinating Committee. The second project deals with "literary centrism" and resulted in two books, *Centrisme interlittéraire des littératures de l'Europe centrale* (Pospíšil and Zelenka 1999) and *Il Mediterraneo: Una rete interletteraria* (Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000), published after Ďurišin's death.

Franco Moretti has recently argued that "[a]lthough the term 'world literature' has been around for almost two centuries, we do not yet have a genuine theory of the object – however loosely defined – to which it refers" (2006: 113). This statement provokes the following questions: Why is world literature now accepted as an "object" when it was denied that condition before (Moretti 2000: 55)? What is the (negative) referent to the statement that we lack a "genuine theory"? Third, and no less important, to whom does "we" refer in terms of a collective of researchers who supposedly lack a theory of world literature?

The relevance of these questions may be grasped when we consider Ďurišin's unified systemic theory of world literature, which is based on a specific definition of the object of study from the late 1960s onward. If the attribution of a paradigm change to a single theory is a key factor for its being accepted as "genuine theory," as Pierre Swiggers (1982) and Eva Kushner (1995) have argued with relation to comparative literature, such is undoubtedly the case with Ďurišin's theory. The fact that systemic theories have only a restricted dissemination in the USA is an important factor here, which renders only more striking the recent (re-)emergence of a systemic approach such as Moretti's.

## Ďurišin's reconfiguration of comparative literature

Starting in the late 1960s, Ďurišin's aim was to formulate a general theory of world literature, which in the first instance involved a systematic critique of the so-called "French school" of comparative literature. The "French school" meant primarily the comparison of pairs of works belonging to different foreign literatures that moreover showed a demonstrable contact relation, or in other words that the target-work showed the influence of the source-work.

Systematic criticism of these tenets was necessary for two main reasons, according to Ďurišin. First, literary relations never develop between just two elements, but at several levels simultaneously, such as, for instance, between the source-element, the target-element, and their respective contexts, or between the source- and target-systems and their contexts. The particular reception of Byron in Slovakia during the second third of the nineteenth century is the result of the interliterary relations both between English and Slovak literatures and between Slovak and Russian literatures. These multi-level relationships provide us with information about the systemic situation of Slovak literature at that moment (Ďurišin 1984: 114). Second, traditional concepts such as "source" and "influence" emphasize the authority of the source-literature and the passive role of reception, something that Ďurišin saw empirically refuted by his study of the relationship between the Slovak realist short story and Gogol's work (Ďurišin 1966). The theoretical outcomes of these observations yielded the 1967 *Problémy literárnej komparatistiky*, which includes a preliminary model of interliterary relations.

For Ďurišin the traditional concept of "influence" is based on a causalist view of literary relations which overlooks the creative power of reception, including the "thesis of selection," meaning that the selection of an element from the source-system by the target-system is due not to the function this element plays in the

former system, but rather to the role it may play within the latter system. Moreover, the elements from the source-system may be either functionally essential or contingent (1984: 162). For instance, in the reception of Gogol by Slovak literature, a key element of his poetics (the contrastive depiction of characters) is transformed into a contingent element because of its low functionality within the Slovak recipient structure. Ďurišin argues that the reception of a work should be analyzed within the functional context of several mechanisms of coexistence of literary phenomena at both the intra- and inter-literary levels. Ďurišin distinguishes two classes of functions. The "integrative function" posits a relation of identification and adaptation whereby elements from the source-literature are assimilated by the target-literature in a positive way, the most extreme case being that of plagiarism. The "differentiation function," on the other hand, expresses a desire for distancing. Here, the aim of translating an element from the source-literature to the target-literature is to stress their difference by way of a negative attitude (1984: 166). Parody is an obvious example of this function.

In certain periods a literary system within an interliterary community may identify itself with the poetics of a second system as a way of distancing itself at the same time from a third system. Consider, for instance, the case of Baroque Slavism as an aesthetic way to strengthen the relations within the Slavic community through rewritings of Tasso, countering the growing Turkish influence (Koprda 2000). Neither of these functions operates exclusively via direct contact between works. According to Ďurišin, one has also to take into consideration the case of literary similarities/differences which may not be explained by contact, but by typological affinities. Integration and differentiation are therefore the laws that explain literary evolution as a dialectic between unity and diversity.

At the core of this theory is Ďurišin's classification of genetic contacts and typological affinities within the interliterary process (1967: 42–108), which results in the dismissal of a clear-cut division between an intraliterary domain (the traditional field of national literary studies) and an interliterary domain (the traditional field of comparative literature). For Ďurišin such a division "fails both theoretically and declaratively to appreciate the inner correlation and mutual conditionedness of intraliterary and interliterary moments in literary evolution" (1974: 117). Whereas a genetic kinship is the result of a direct contact between two works (for instance, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* as a rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe*), in typological affinities there is no direct contact, but a literary similarity that may be due to economic, political, social, or psychological reasons (for instance, the generic similarity between the medieval French *roman* and the Japanese *monogatari*). One therefore understands why in this theory world literature is not a sort of ultimate goal one may achieve after comparing national literatures, but rather the starting-point. In the same way, Ďurišin argues, the study of relations within a single national literature depends on a previous notion of the features of this body: "The concept of world literature is of practical importance not only with regard to practice, but also in determining the fundamental methodic procedures in comparatistic research" (1984: 85). As there is no strict border between contacts within a single literature or among several literatures, analysis should always involve a combination of historical poetics and structural systematics as contact and typological conditioning take place on a world scale.

The theory of interliterary process, in distinction from national and comparative literary studies, thus aims to explain the unfolding of literature as a history of tensions arising from the integration and differentiation functions between the extremes of national and world literature.

## The theory of interliterary process: a systemic approach to world literature

For Ďurišin, the interliterary process consists of the integration of literary relationships whose final stage is represented by world literature. World literature is defined as the structured system of literary phenomena that are either genetically or typologically related (Ďurišin 1992: 200). Between the poles of literary particulars (national literatures) and literary universals (world literature) of the integration process, Ďurišin distinguishes two stages which are subject to change, namely, interliterary community (either standard or specific) and interliterary centrism. The fact that national literatures can be members of several interliterary communities at the same time, or of distinct interliterary communities in turn, substantiates several kinds of change: "literary evolution is also made of sudden ruptures; unexpected changes whereby the literary process is influenced" (1992: 200). As for world literature, literary change is also multi-level inasmuch as "world literature is not an unchanging category; quite the contrary, it is a changing and adaptive phenomenon in accordance with historical periods, national literatures, and readers … It is precisely the historicity of world literature that allows us to formulate a history of world literature" (1992: 197).

One of the most controversial aspects of Ďurišin's theory is his understanding of national literatures as the minimal units of the interliterary process (Domínguez 2006). Part of the problem lies in applying the concept of "national literature" to five different categories which belong to a level below that of interliterary communities, namely, "oral literature of tribal societies," "city-state literature," "medieval ethnic literature," "national literature," and "modern ethnic literature." As the first three categories are conceived of as premodern kinds of national literature and the last category makes reference to the literature of a community which lives within another community (for instance, Slovak literature in Hungary), the teleological feature of the classification is conspicuous, with the fourth category serving as epiphenomenon: "The process of national literature formation has not yet finished, and not only within Europe" (Ďurišin 1993: 18). This national teleology is even more prominent when Ďurišin considers national literature to be the main systemic unity: "If the systemic unity of the constituents, manifested by relationships and affinities, represents the national-literary, then what sustains the interliterary will essentially consist of the same particular complex of relationships, expressed, however, by different systemic classification" (1984: 94).

Another controversial aspect of considering national literatures as the minimal units of the interliterary process is linked to their homogenization. If, as Ďurišin argues, the national literary process imprints a sort of unity on the works produced within it, this means that those literary features which have not been assimilated by

the national canon cannot proceed to the next stage (the interliterary process) and therefore cannot take part in world literature. In short, world literature according to this theory is only the outcome of a cumulative and irreversible process, despite Ďurišin's stress on change.

After establishing the methodological reconfiguration of comparative literature and a systemic definition of world literature, Ďurišin's conception of interliterariness demands an in-depth analysis of the interliterary process between national literatures and world literature.

The first intermediate level is represented by "interliterary communities." As a result of the relevance he grants to national literature, Ďurišin distinguishes two classes of community depending upon their degree of proximity to the national units. A "specific interliterary community" refers to the coexistence of several literary systems whose level of integration is close to that of national literatures. For Ďurišin, the literatures of the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, and Spain are clear examples of such specific communities in which the proclivity for the "historical-literary unity of national literature" is due to politico-administrative factors (Ďurišin 1993: 22–23). A "standard interliterary community" refers to the co-existence of national literatures whose interaction is the result of several factors, such as ethnicity (Slavic interliterary community), geography (Scandinavian interliterary community), ideology (socialist interliterary community), or religion (Islamic interliterary community), but the outcome of which is not a literary unity as homogeneous as that of a national literature. For interliterary communities, Ďurišin planned a large-scale research study whose results are collected in the first five volumes of *Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá* (Ďurišin et al. 1987–93). Published between 1987 and 1993, these volumes represent Ďurišin's alternative to the literary histories sponsored by the Gorki Institute and the ICLA Coordinating Committee, both of which, according to the Slovak scholar, lack what he considered to be a key requirement: a "classification of the initial principles for a systematics of the interliterary process" (Ďurišin 1989: 140).

The second intermediate level is represented by "literary centrisms," which Ďurišin defines either as regional bodies larger than communities, or as communities that play a large-scale integrative role, as may be observed in the "active centrisms within literary life in Africa, Latin America and Asia, for instance" (Ďurišin 1993: 24). The integration of individual European communities within a higher body (European literature) is a representative example of what Ďurišin would call "European centrism." For his ideas on centrisms, Ďurišin draws on René Etiemble's and Desiderio Navarro's discussions of Eurocentrism, which the Slovak scholar qualifies in the sense that he sees centrism as a consequence of the world literary process itself. Therefore, the integration role played by centrisms may be correlated with literary communities that work, in a Wallerstein-like way, as real world-literatures. For the research on centrism Ďurišin put together new research teams according to the required fields of expertise (Pospíšil and Zelenka 1999 for Central-European centrism; Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000 for Mediterranean centrism). However, due to his unexpected death in 1997, it is not possible to predict which new directions might have emerged from the study of both centrisms and world literature in this perspective.

Still, a clue to such potential new directions may be found in two books. The sixth volume of *Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá*, authored only by Ďurišin (1993), provides us with a terminological and methodological synthesis of the empirical work carried out on interliterary communities in a range of different locations, from Central and Eastern Europe to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The section on the main forms of interliterariness deserves special mention, as it discusses phenomena such as "literary syncretism," seen as a variety of integration via centrisms and colonial relationships (for example, the rewriting of non-European stories via European genres), "programmed complementariness," a factor that explains the specific articulation of specific communities (for instance, the role played by Slavic ballads in the literary history of each national literature), and "complementary function," which clarifies how (monolingual) translation works within a plurilingual community where the translation of foreign works into one language of the community prevents translation into other languages of the community in question. The collective volume *Koncepcie svetovej literatúry*, published posthumously but planned by Ďurišin himself as a test of his theory on world literature in relation to globalization (Koška and Koprda 2003), provides good indications of how the theory of interliterary process was being updated by Ďurišin in accordance with new phenomena.

In short, the key aim of the theory of interliterary process is to provide evidence against the analysis of national literatures and world literature as independent categories. Neither are monolithic entities; instead they are in constant communication and change. Interliterary categories are an attempt at showing the ways in which literary systems operate and correlate, which means that Ďurišin's theory is functionally oriented in order to find the global patterns of world literature.

## An updated interliterary research agenda

It is not possible in a brief overview to deal with all of the issues that the theory of interliterary process raises. The assessment of ideas formulated over three decades should also include the research carried out both by Ďurišin's team (a collective of over fifty scholars) and by other researchers at the Institute of World Literature in Bratislava and abroad. Furthermore, the need to test, emend and update his theory was emphasized by Ďurišin himself when he called attention to the fact that "a complete definition of world literature may not be given once and for all; otherwise it would be a closed system and, hence, a dead one" (1993: 30).

It is surprising that the proponents of the "new" systemic approach to world literature that has recently (re-)emerged in the USA, Franco Moretti, Andrew Milner (2004), Alexander Beecroft (2008), and Emily Apter (2009), never mention Ďurišin. Moreover, Moretti is the only one to ground his proposals in a systemic theory formulated *stricto sensu* for literature. Moretti draws not only on Wallerstein's systemic theory of capitalism, but also on Itamar Even-Zohar's concept of literary polysystems, even though this theory never dealt with world literature as such. This leads me to pose the following questions: why has Ďurišin's theory been overlooked? And to what extent is Ďurišin's theory still valid?

As to the first question, the lack of both information on and concern for Ďurišin's theory (Gálik 2000) in US academe – with the important exception of Claudio Guillén, who considered Ďurišin's work "one of the best presentations of our discipline" (1993: 82) – should be seen in the light of the generally reluctant acceptance of literary systems theory in the USA, in contrast to its comparatively ready acceptance in Canada in the 1990s by Milan V. Dimić, Eva Kushner and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek. Although this reluctance has not met with a compelling explanation so far, it seems clear that a significant issue is the criticism of structuralism on the grounds of its universalism and difficulty in explaining literary change. This may be why the main source for the (re-)emergence of a systemic approach in the USA is found with social scientists, such as Wallerstein, and not with structural and systemic theories of literature (Earl Miner is an important exception in the field of comparative poetics).

In the case of Ďurišin, one should also take into account his phenomenological approach to the formalist-morphologic-structuralist foundations of his theory as well as Robert Young's observation that "structuralism was developed by the Prague school as an anti-western strategy, directed against the hierarchical cultural and racial assumptions of imperialist European thought" (2001: 67–68). I think Young's point is important when it comes to Ďurišin's neglect in the USA. "'French theory,'" Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen argue in their collection *French Theory in America*, "is an American invention, going back to at least the eighteenth century" (2001: 1). Concerning their volume, Rey Chow remarks that "[w]hat made me curious, I must admit, was not so much French theory *per se* but what the contributors thought about the connection 'in America'" (2006: 17).

One thing here seems to have been neglected: a good deal of what is being called "French theory" comes in fact from Eastern Europe (Young 2001: 413). This is not insignificant in the case of Ďurišin, because, contrary to the internationalization of Czech structuralism via France and the USA, the unfortunate oversight of Ďurišin's theories is closely related to his attack on "French" methods of comparative literature. Another factor not to be overlooked is the connection of Ďurišin's theory to the "internationalist paradigm" (Ruffel 2005), which has one of its starting-points in Marx's reflections on world literature. Finally, Ďurišin's research was carried out within the institutional framework of an Institute of World Literature in accordance with a specific comparatist model prevalent in the (ex-)Soviet countries (Epelboin 2005). All these circumstances may continue to make Ďurišin unattractive to the new "global design" (world literature) of US academe.

As for Ďurišin's importance today, testing and updating his systemic approach to world literature would indeed be an appropriate task for research (Domínguez 2007). As examples of the areas that need work, consider the problems of positing national literatures as the minimal units of the interliterary process, the teleology of the national-interliterary-world stages, the difficulties of explaining both regional and other "peripheral" literary traditions, the transnational circulation of works that are published in several languages at the same time, and the extrapolation of intraliterary symmetries into the interliterary domain. A no less important problem is that systemic theories are usually conflated, as if their diverse genealogies would not pose any obstacle to such a reading. Consider, for instance, the conflict between a binary model of micro-level analysis, such as that represented by canonical and non-canonical

works in polysystem theory, and a tripartite model of macro-level analysis, such as that posited by the social-science division of the world economy into core, periphery, and semi-periphery.

In spite of their overlooking of Ďurišin's theory, recent proposals by Moretti, Milner, Beecroft, and Apter are important for implementing an interliterary agenda and building an integral systemic approach to world literature. Both Ďurišin's theory and the US (re-)emergence of a systems approach share what I call a "discipline-dissatisfaction" over the lack of methods for comprehensively surveying the wealth of disparate literary relations pertaining to "world literature." If we concede that world literature "is large and widely connected," we should also concede that what we need is a "perspective … larger still," not only a microscope, but also a "macroscope" (Collins 1999: 1) which should interact with the former. Systems theory can provide us with such a perspective.

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# 12

# CLAUDIO GUILLÉN

## (World) literature as system

*Darío Villanueva*

On Friday 4 May 1827, relates Johann Peter Eckermann (1982), Goethe invited the French scholar Jean-Jacques Ampère to dine with them. Immediately afterwards, alone with his trusted compatriot, Goethe expressed his satisfaction at having been able to form a firm friendship with his French guest, a fellowship which would without doubt result in an increased dissemination of German literature in France, for Ampère had seemed highly cultured, showed no nationalist prejudice, was a man of the world rather than just Paris, and he was confident that this example would soon spread amongst the French.

A few months earlier, the author of *Faust* had expressed quite clearly to Eckermann his conviction that the concept of a national literature no longer made sense and had been replaced by the concept of a *Weltliteratur*, whose advent augured the beginning of a new era. He returned to this theme again in July 1827 when considering what the benefits of a closer literary relationship between the Germans, French and English might mean for this cultural phenomenon, whose features, in his view, would become more precise day by day. And indeed, twenty years later, in 1848, Marx and Engels would include the same concept of *Weltliteratur* in the *Communist Manifesto*, a defining concept of "the quintessential literature of modern times" (Damrosch 2003: 4). Another example of the unstoppable advance of the economy in a direction which would nowadays be identified with so-called globalisation.

Ampère, in fact, belonged to the exclusive circle of the French founders of a new discipline, *Literature Comparée*, which at that time was being nurtured by Abel-François Villemain. As well as its obvious connection to literary history, this new discipline was also linked to criticism, and at the same time closely related to what we now call Literary Theory. Ampère himself, in his inaugural lecture at the University of Marseille in 1830, reiterated the idea that the "philosophy of literature and the arts" should arise from the comparative history of artistic expressions.

So, by the 1830s we have two proposals, both very similar and perhaps symbolized in their proximity by the bonding which occurred at the meeting of Goethe and Ampère. The first proposal, of *Weltliteratur*, responds to the prophetic vision of a major poet, and defines a territory: literature without borders. That is precisely the object of this undertaking, a largely utopian, new discipline based on a method,

namely comparison, which at that time was gaining ground in other scientific areas such as anthropology, anatomy, mythology, embryology, geography, grammar, and linguistics.

It is very significant in this respect that the concept developed initially by Goethe in 1827 is nowadays, almost two centuries later, acquiring a new lease on life. The rapid change in today's society, largely due to new communication technologies, has furthered the transformation of the world into a true "global village" and perhaps this explains, within the scope of our studies, the recovery of the perspective of WORLD LITERATURE. It also coincides with a deep crisis in *Littérature Comparée*, the latest in a series that has affected this discipline throughout its rich and troubled history.

The challenge of Comparative Literature is not without certain utopian elements, born of the vastness of which it is formed and the human constraints with which we must confront it. With this in mind, Claude Pichois and André-M. Rousseau referred to personal conditions such as natural bilingualism, studies abroad, and a cosmopolitan family background. No doubt there are individuals privileged in this respect by reason of family circumstances or geography. In Spain we have enjoyed the privilege of having among us Claudio Guillén Cahen. Born in Paris of a French mother of Jewish origin, he followed his father, the poet Jorge Guillén, into exile, fought in World War II alongside the Allies, was educated in France and the United States, taught in Germany and then at Princeton, San Diego and later at Harvard.

Interestingly, it was at Harvard that the first chair of Comparative Literature was created in 1890, followed fourteen years later by the corresponding department. At the end of his academic career there, Guillén finally returned to Spain as a Professor *in praesentia*, founding a school from which all subsequent Spanish comparatists derive.

In the years between the first publication of *Entre lo uno y lo diverso* in 1985 and his last work *De leyendas y lecciones* (2007), Claudio Guillén wrote in Spain a total of ten books, which form the core of his bibliographic output, a production which dates back to 1971 with *Literature as System*, an influential study written in English and published by Princeton.

*Literature as System* immediately became a required-reading reference text for all those involved in literary studies. In this and his later essays, the *maestro* remained faithful to a conception of the rigorous study of literature as the sum of a harmonious and balanced *theoretical foundation* dating back to classical poetics and rhetoric, of a *critical approach* to singular texts, and of an inescapable *historical perspective*, with *Comparatism* acting as a fertile liaison between these constituents.

Guillén's teaching rested on this solid basis, and it is precisely for that reason we find it so convincing. In the preface to his last book, *De leyendas y lecciones*, he states "the vocation of what I prefer to call criticism has been essential and tenaciously integrative. At all times, it has held as a keystone the convergence of three forms of knowledge and three avenues of research: careful reading of the texts, their proper position in the history of literature, and the appropriate use of theoretical terms. Criticism, history, and theory, then, as not sufficient in themselves but indispensable as bases of work to be done" (Guillén 2007: 8).

But undoubtedly the most influential work of Claudio Guillén in the area of studies referred to as *World Literature* was his introduction to the subject, published in Spain in 1985, and later translated into Italian (Guillén 1992) and English with the

expressive title *The Challenge of Comparative Literature* (Guillén 1993). This book was later revised and a new edition published in Spain shortly before his death in January 2007, and includes a new preface titled "La Literatura Comparada y la crisis de las humanidades" (Guillén 2005).

His position is, however, less pessimistic than that suggested by the provocative title that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak gave her "Wellek Library Lectures on Critical Theory" of 2000: *Death of a Discipline*. She advocates an in-depth renewal, and, just as René Wellek, Etiemble, D. Fokkema and P. Swiggers had in their day demanded a new paradigm for Comparative Literature, so too does Spivak believe that her book should be read as "a gasp of a dying discipline".

However, Guillen presents himself as fully conscious of having been trained, and fully involved in what he terms "the Golden Age of Comparative Literature," covering the forty years between the end of World War II and the publication of *Entre lo uno y lo diverso* in 1985.

He had dedicated this book to René Wellek and to Harry Levin, who was one of his teachers, together with Renato Poggioli, in the department at Harvard. Particularly, to Wellek he explicitly acknowledges his connection with a basic line of research in contemporary theory, the literary phenomenology of the Polish philosopher and critic Roman Ingarden which derives from Husserl (Guillén 2001: 26). In fact, Guillén (2001) wrote generously of his intellectual debt to all of them, as well as to teachers of Hispanic studies in the United States; figures such as Américo Castro, Joaquin Casalduero, and the poet Pedro Salinas, a companion of his father, Jorge Guillén, and the Nobel Prize winner for Literature Vicente Alexandre as members of the Spanish "Generation of 1927".

Although for family and historical reasons he was educated not in Spain but in France, Germany, and the United States, his link with Spanish literature and thought was very strong through the teaching of these eminent scholars, his fellow exiles, so that his approach to world literature is completely imbued with a Hispanic cultural legacy. Claudio Guillén returned to Spain in 1982 to occupy chairs in the universities of Barcelona and Pompeu Fabra. He also chaired the Spanish Society of General and Comparative Literature, was made a member of the Royal Spanish Academy, and was editor for several publishing projects, including the Library of Universal Literature. Consequently, the indelible stamp that the memory of his personality and work has left in Spain is linked to the enormous task of developing comparatism in his country of origin and campaigning for its official recognition in Spanish universities. But equally, Claudio Guillén deserves to be remembered for his worldliness rooted in the rich literary and cultural tradition produced by the Spanish language on both sides of the Atlantic. An instance of this duality is given in the following "Dear Reader" statement in the foreword to one of the books he published on his return: "If you only knew how difficult it is for me to set a Spanish theme exclusively within Spain!" (Guillén 1989: 13).

At the beginning of our millennium Guillén remained convinced that literary studies depended on a kind of intellectual "three-demensional dynamics", and that it was no stranger to the tensions and "exclusionary attitudes" that emerged from the dialogue between the discipline known as Comparative Literature, on the one hand, and History, Criticism, and Literary Theory, on the other. But when referring to the

object of these studies, his vision adjusts closely to the old Goethean concept of *Weltliteratur*: "Literature is the great crossroads." And for him, the awareness of literature as a whole – he writes in Spanish, "literatura como morada total" – "still appears to us as an open project and an extremely challenging task" (Guillén 2001: 41).

The phenomenological and, we might also say, pragmatic emphasis that Guillén found in Wellek is echoed by Damrosch when he states, "to understand the working of world literature, we need more a phenomenology than an ontology of the work of art" (Damrosch 2003: 6). And that notion of literature as *morada* ("abode"), which derives from the controversial interpretation of the history of Spain held by Américo Castro (1954), that Guillén used as the title of another of his books published in Spain (Guillén 1998), comes very close to Damrosch's own interpretation of Goethe's concept of a "nascent interest in works that would serve as windows into foreign worlds, whether or not these works could be constructed as masterpieces and regardless of whether these differing worlds had any visible links to each other at all" (Damrosch 2003: 15).

Guillén continued to the last in his advocacy of "knowledge of literary writing throughout the world, that is an open world, from Goethe and Romanticism, to the countless variety of languages, literary traditions and periods that determine the dialectic between the One and the Many (unity and multiplicity)" (Guillén 2004: 15). But when it came to giving a name to such an activity, his discomfort and dissatisfaction were evident. His major work begins with references to "a certain tendency or branch of literary investigation that involves the systematic study of supranational assemblages" (Guillén 1993: 3) and the denomination of *comparative literature* seemed a resort to "a conventional and not very enlightening label". Also in the preface to the new Spanish edition of 2004 he has not changed his previous assessment of this "conventional label – and rather unfortunate, because everywhere people never stop comparing." What he does define without any reservation is the nature of this activity, consisting of "systematic knowledge and the critical and historical study of literature in general throughout the length and breadth of a world literary space" (Guillén 2004: 11).

I would like to emphasize two aspects of the quotations in the last paragraph: The first has to do with the systematic, which immediately leads us to his above-mentioned book of 1971, which was preceded by an article published in Spanish in *Filologia Romanza* simply entitled "Literatura como sistema" (Guillén 1957). The second aspect to which I refer is the emphasis Guillén puts on literary space – or *morada* (or roads, open windows, open borders … ), a truly global opening. However, this does not mean that for him the rubric coined by Goethe is more satisfactory than that of Comparative Literature. Guillén dedicated a chapter of his book to *Weltliteratur* after remarking that "the term is extremely vague – or should we say in a more positive way, it is too suggestive, and is therefore open to many misunderstandings" (Guillén 1993: 38).

There are three recorded senses of *Weltliteratur*, and Guillén does not hesitate to qualify all of them as "misguided." Firstly, the sum of all the national literatures would amount to a chaotic and virtually unlimited set, whether considered in space or in time, which is in itself the most feverish of utopias.

Another option would be to understand *Weltliteratur* as the set of canonical masterpieces or universal authors. Harold Bloom does not occupy significant space in the writings of Guillén, perhaps because his controversial work on the canon postdates the first edition of *Entre lo uno y lo diverso*, but latterly Guillén applauded his resolute defense of recognized literary values (Guillén 2001: 106) against the relativism that he saw as nothing more than the worst of the legacy left us from deconstruction. However, the mere formulation of a canon always runs the risk of ending in "a pretentious personal anthology" (Guillén 2004: 62).

Finally, he is not convinced that World Literature must necessarily coincide with its reduction to an extensive selection of classic literature, on the rather idealistic assumption that his works are those that concern us all.

What Guillén does accept as a legacy from Goethe is his emphasis on the universality of literary phenomena beyond any narcissistic drive fuelled by nationalism, and his interest in the traffic – not to say trade – that fully functioning literature implies. To a large extent, both Goethe and the founders of *Littérature Comparée* emerge from the spirit of the rationalist Enlightenment that inspired, among other advances, the universal recognition of human rights. These Franco-German precursors encouraged the growing importance of dialogue among literatures as a result of their freely receiving many works from outside their own language and native cultures, thanks to the increasing ease of communication between individuals and communities, a fact which also led Marx and Engels to foresee great infrastructural changes. Guillén adds to all this another idea that the author of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* had in mind: the ability of the best literature to express universally the deepest, most common and long-lasting human experience.

The History of Literature as an academic discipline put an end to the previous conception in which there was no separate identification of literature written in one or another language. Prior to the nineteenth century, it was commonly accepted that there was *one* Literature, which took on different manifestations in different linguistic codes, but both the schooling of writers and the study of the Arts derived from a common homeland which Rhetoric and Poetics set firmly in a supranational tradition originating in Greece and Rome. As Claudio Guillén wrote (1993: 25), "the unity of the poetic always triumphed over the diversity of the poetry." When that main line, which had been maintained until the early nineteenth century, became fragmented, Comparative Literature stepped in to try to restore the continuity, but in a different way. That is, to restore it not from some "literary universals," but from the "literary particulars" artistically expressed in each of the languages, pooled, compared and evaluated to understand their similarities and differences. In this process it is noticeable that there is, as Claudio Guillén (1993: 27) points out, a "fruitful historical paradox: the rise of nationalism will lay the foundation for a new internationalism." In this way Comparative Literature is also a kind of militant ideology, a set of ideas together with a broad view of Literature, Humanism, and History itself, something with sources in the nineteenth century (not to go back to the Enlightenment) that are liberal, pacifist, and cosmopolitan.

In that same spirit, though expressed less strongly, Claudio Guillén wrote his *Introducción a la literatura comparada*, where time and again he proclaims that the comparative approach should be extremely sensitive to the tensions between the

local and the universal, the particular and the general, extending links between the two poles but never favoring one to the detriment of another. And always with the desire to overcome cultural nationalism, the use of literature in nationalist channels, narcissistic instincts, and ideological purposes. In fact, nothing less than "the dream, in Goethe's words, of a 'world literature'" (Guillén 1993: 4).

The authority of T.S. Eliot with regard to Comparative Literature is not always held in high esteem. Although the Nobel Prize winner from St. Louis was one of the first graduates of this discipline at Harvard in 1906, where Claudio Guillén himself earned his doctorate in 1953 with a thesis on the origins and nature of picaresque literature directed by Harry Levin, the Spanish comparatist found himself unable to endorse "an atemporal and classistic order à la T.S. Eliot" (Guillén 1993: 329). It was necessary to transform this kind of idealised and chaotic Parnassus in a field of study, a set of dwellings, in a network of texts written yesterday and today in different languages viewed from multiple windows or observational viewpoints.

And to do that Guillén brought back into play an idea that had first appeared in an earlier article and in his first book published in English fourteen years previously: *Literature as System*. In this, following a line that would not be alien to Eliot himself, Guillén breaks with the conviction that "the individual work of art did not merely become an additional unit in a sum of separate units. It entered a structural whole, a system; among those parts significant and reciprocal relations existed" (Guillén 1971: 5).

Against the intractable chaos of a summative, utopianly exhaustive *Weltliteratur*, to be held as an object for comparison, Guillén countered with his concept of World Literature as a network, as a space with omissions but capable of being studied and understood as a real system. From the very start of his work as a comparatist, Guillén rejects any "atomistic fallacy in Literary studies," an attitude against which he presents as an alternative the notion of "literature as a whole."

There is no doubt that in this he was influenced by the example of linguistic structuralism developed by Saussure, to whom he dedicated an article in 1957. And it is precisely at this point that he expressly links the idea of tradition by T.S. Eliot with that of *Weltliteratur* (Guillén 1971: 51). Although *Literature as System* is not regarded as a work expressly in comparative literature, it becomes part of "the synthetic-systematic aspirations that are an essential legacy of comparative literature." It is from this comparative attitude that he interpreted the meaning of T.S. Eliot's essay, because in the light of that system of concomitants, simultaneity, and interactions which occur in the effective functioning of Literature, "Literary Traditions are oriented to the present and to synchrony. They are only vaguely, or sentimentally, historical" (Guillén 1971: 453).

Of course, there is a qualitative leap from the *structure* to the *system*. This turns out to be more inclusive, and so always contains one or more structures, which does not happen in reverse. Guillén admits his debt to "the Saussurian model" but also owes much to the work of Wellek and the Russian formalists (Guillén 1971: 495–96), not to mention the no less detectable influence of D. Durišin (1967), for whom *Weltliteratur* was not the sum of all the literatures or the mere canon, but the wider interliterary community.

This Guillénian notion of a system implies a "will to order" and illuminates literary history "by a tendency toward system or structuration" (Guillén 1971: 6).

Obviously, for Guillén, "a system is more than a combination or a sum of its components. It implies a certain dependence of the parts on the whole, and a substantial impact of the basic interrelationships" (Guillén 1971: 378).

In short: Claudio Guillén brings with his article of 1957 and his book of 1971 an injection of the structural principle of the *system* into the paradigm of Comparative Literature, beyond the limitations on positivism of the so-called "French hour" of the discipline, which in itself implies a profound questioning of the status of systems from their own theoretical foundations. And World Literature, conceived of as an object or area of study rather than a discipline, is the stage on which the systems and subsystems produced pragmatically as the operations of literary phenomena are revealed.

It seems clear that the young Guillén endorsed a whole theoretical tradition, both literary and linguistic, bringing together the Russian formalists, the Bratislava school, the Central European phenomenology transplanted to the United States by Wellek, and the structuralism of Saussure. However, towards the end of the last century, Guillén, was not only working within that tradition, but also continued developing it and became a precursor of later changes which have since become significant in the movement for a renewal of literary studies.

Today the ties between the *Empirische Literaturwissenschaft* of J. Siegfried Schmidt and other proposals such as the Semiotics of Culture of Yuri Lotman, the studies on the "Literary field" of Pierre Bourdieu, the Notion System of Nicholas Luhmann and, above all, the Theory of Polysystems developed by Itamar Even-Zohar (1990) are all well known. Guillén immediately realized the systemic relevance of these contributions for the renovation of comparative studies. *The Challenge of Comparative Literature* details the significant contribution that all this represents as a further development of approaches that already existed in Russian formalism. "The interrelations that structure a polysystem are conflictive and hierarchical" and are translated into dualities such as "central/peripheral, low/high, primary/secondary, canonical/non-canonical" (Guillén 1993: 308–9). Some of these contrasts serve to explain the internal tension of a particular literary system, such as the distinctions that can be made between sub-literature, trivial literature, and serious literature – a frontier that Cultural Studies has long since crossed. But what is of particular interest to us is the progress of the group theories of Tel-Aviv and its Belgian partner J. Lambert (1987, 1997) in their study of intersystemic relationships. That is, "the contacts between national and supranational systems, and those between literary polysystems and cultural megasystems." Thus, concludes Guillén (1993: 309), expressing the belief that "this method can undoubtedly be very well adapted for use in comparative studies proper."

This Spanish master's convictions have found support in the proposals for a new Comparative Literature voiced variously since the 1990s, but particularly by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (1992, 1998, 2002) in confluence with the ongoing development of theories of literature in Europe and Israel. In fact, Tötösy's initiative is identified with the broad rubric of "The Systemic and Empirical Approach to Literature and Culture." One of its fundamental principles is to yoke the development of new comparative studies with the empirical-systemic as a provider of analytical procedures based on evidence. The study of literature in this new paradigm will be firmly

focused via a general consideration of culture, and its development will require a strong interdisciplinarism and even teamwork, something to which humanists are traditionally disinclined.

In the context of the debate raised by globalization, this new comparative dimension of Literature and Cultures will reject the slightest hint of becoming an instrument of the worst kind of globalization "as a global and inclusive discipline of international humanities with focus on literature" (Tötösy de Zepetnek 1998: 18). Its proponents, apart from theoretical and methodological rigorousness, will have a certain militant attitude – characteristic of comparatists since the nineteenth century and fully shared by Claudio Guillén – now focused on a better understanding of everything related to the Otherness and determined to vindicate, against its technocratic or economic detractors, the social relevance of the humanities.

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# 13
# EDWARD W. SAID
## The worldliness of world literature

*Jonathan Arac*

Edward W. Said contributed to world literature both as a scholar and as a practitioner who perfected a distinctive style as an essayist, at once lucid and lyrical, critical and deeply personal. His books of criticism, especially *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), along with many essays collected in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) and *Reflections on Exile* (2000), helped to reshape the field of comparative literature, initiate postcolonial studies, and establish terms for the recent renewal of world literature as a live topic. His writings have been widely translated, especially *Orientalism*, and in this sense his own work has been incorporated into world literature. Moreover, during the latter portion of his career, he was regularly publishing original work both in French (especially in *Le Monde diplomatique*, Paris) and in Arabic (especially in *Al-Ahram*, Cairo), so that in this further sense also he participated actively in a world literary practice.

Born an American citizen and a Protestant Arab in Jerusalem in 1935 and educated in English and French schools in Cairo, Said was sent to school in the United States as a teenager, studied at Princeton and Harvard, and served as a professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York from 1963 until his death in 2003. As a Palestinian, exiled from his homeland by the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, he devoted years of his life and ceaseless effort to both scholarly and political argument concerning what he called in the title of his 1979 book "The Question of Palestine." He also composed a personally reflective text, part memoir, part ethnography, in dialogue with photographs by Jean Mohr, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986), which takes its title from a poem by Mahmoud Darwish.

The personal unease that gave the title *Out of Place* to Said's (1999) memoir of his life before university studies became for him the productive basis for his distinctive perspective. It can be seen from the beginning of his career, and he grasped it, articulated it, and made it an enduring theme in his mid-career essay "Reflections on Exile" (1984, Said 2000). The distanced point of view associated with exile may be felt in the concluding sentences of *Culture and Imperialism*: "It is more rewarding – and more difficult – to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about 'us.' But this also means … above all, not

constantly reiterating how 'our' culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter). For the intellectual, there is quite enough of value to do without *that*" (336).

Said's first major publications feature figures who remained important to him throughout his life. First came the exiled Pole-become-Briton Joseph Conrad, the great modernist writer of Africa, the East Indies, and Latin America, whose "Fiction of Autobiography" was the focus of Said's first book (1966). Conrad's birth in 1857 came in the middle of the extended century in which Poles were a nation without a state, as Polish territory was divided among the empires of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Conrad explained the "unconventionality" and "impropriety" of his own life-writing in *A Personal Record* by regretting that he could not "begin with the sacramental words, 'I was born on such a date in such a place'," since the "remoteness of the locality," would baffle his readers (Conrad 1959: 193). Jerusalem is better known but no less baffling as a displaced place of origin, and Said shared Conrad's sense of coming from a people little known and much misunderstood. Conrad still forms a fundamental point of reference for *Culture and Imperialism*, and even in the last book published in Said's lifetime, *Freud and the Non-European* (2003b).

Second came the German and Jewish scholar of Romance philology, and especially of Dante, Erich Auerbach, who fled to Istanbul to escape Hitler's persecution. From this location, straddling the border of Europe, amidst a Muslim people speaking a non-Indo-European language, Auerbach composed his great work *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946, English trans. 1953; see Mufti in this volume); one of Said's last publications was a long introduction to the fiftieth-anniversary edition of the English translation. Already near the start of his career, Said had collaborated in translating a late essay of Auerbach's, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" (Auerbach 1952, trans. 1969). The translators' headnote evokes the heritage from Goethe in the term *Weltliteratur* (the German term, coined by Goethe in 1827, from which the English "world literature" derives) and characterizes it as a "visionary concept, for it transcends national literatures without, at the same time, destroying their individualities," and they noted that Auerbach's *Weltliteratur* must be understood "not as a selective collection of world classics or great books … but rather as a concert of all the literature produced by man about man" (Auerbach 1969: 1). Said's most important critical thinking continued to work with the musical metaphor – he was an accomplished pianist and published several books devoted to music – but in his later work he developed models that emphasized the plurality of "counterpoint" rather than the unison of "concert."

Auerbach ended his essay by quoting in Latin from the twelfth-century theologian Hugo of St. Victor, a passage that Said returned to throughout his career: "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land [the Latin text is more explicit here – *perfectus vero cui mundus totus exilium est*]" (17; English and gloss quoted from Said 1983: 7). Auerbach's embrace of Hugo across barriers of time, space, and religion begins a process of world-literature making, and Said's embrace of Auerbach carries it a step further. The many readers of Said who learn of both Auerbach and Hugo from him form a third stage, often guided by Said into further worldly venues. An uncanny echo of Hugo appears in a

passage from Karl Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that Said cites in his essay "On Repetition." In criticizing the French revolutionaries of 1848 for their dependence on models from the first French Revolution, Marx states, "In the same way a beginner who has learned a new language always retranslates it into his mother tongue: he can only be said to have appropriated the spirit of the new language … when he forgets his original language while using the new one" (Said 1983: 123).

This figure of the beginner in Marx and Hugo became Said's self-figuration in his first widely influential book, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975), a brilliant, passionate, and enduring product of the American Theory movement of the 1970s. Said adapts from "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" (14) Auerbach's notion of the "point of departure" (*Ansatzpunkt*). To deal with a massive and heterogeneous field of materials, such as those that world literature might entail, "even a beginner," says Auerbach, can advance by choosing "a firmly circumscribed, easily comprehensible set of phenomena whose interpretation is a radiation out from them and which orders and interprets a greater region." This methodological concern for the scholar in turn echoes the imaginative problem defined by Conrad in a letter near the start of his career, quoted in Said's first book: "Other writers have starting points. Something to catch hold of. … They lean on dialect – or on tradition – or on history. … But at any rate they know something to begin with – while I don't" (Said 1966: 54). Conrad, as an exile, lacks the "fulcrum" necessary to move his "world."

To think effectively about Edward Said in relation to world literature requires recognizing his distinctive way of emphasizing the world. In "History, Literature, and Geography" (1995), originally presented as an address to Egyptian professors of English, Said offers an understanding of the world we live in that is crucial for his critical contribution: "What if the world has changed so drastically as to allow now for almost the first time a new geographical consciousness of a decentered or multiply-centered world, a world no longer sealed within watertight compartments of art or culture or history, but mixed, mixed up, varied, complicated by the new difficult mobility of migrations?" As a result of this world-transformation, it may now be possible for "a specialist in Indian or Arabic literature to look at Western literature not as if the center was Europe, but rather as if his/her optic needed also to include equally India, Egypt, or Syria *and* Europe and America as well" (Said 2000: 471). For Said, the world of world literature requires a vividly concrete sense of geography and an acknowledgement both of large-scale relationships of political power and also of human-scale circumstances of individual lives.

Key terms in Said's critical vocabulary include "worldly" and "worldliness." In "The Politics of Knowledge" (1991), he offers his view that "intellectual work" is "human work" and for that reason is "worldly," by which he means: "situated in the world, and about that world. It is not about things that are so rigidly constricted and so forbiddingly arcane as to exclude all but an audience of like-minded, already fully convinced persons" (Said 2000: 375). Worldliness, then, involves both ways of knowing and ways of writing – it makes a rhetorical demand as well as an intellectual demand. This criterion of worldliness leads to repeated polemic in Said's later work, his critique of all forms of identitarian thinking and his distrust of the category of identity itself, whether that of religious groups, of national groups, or of minority, ethnic, or racial groups. Here is where he differs most distinctly from the Humanist

tradition of world literature that he finds in Auerbach, which cherishes national difference, even as it also seeks understanding that transcends them. Said emphasizes the movement beyond.

In "The Politics of Knowledge," discussing the novella "Men in the Sun" (1962) by the exiled Palestinian writer and political activist Ghassan Kanafani (1936–72), Said further characterizes worldliness in relation to "the large, many-windowed house of human culture as a whole." Works of literature must be felt in their humanity so that they will not be treated only as "informative ethnographical specimens, suitable for the limited attention of experts and area specialists." This desired worldliness is "the opposite of separatism," because it rescues works from the "neglect and secondariness to which for all kinds of political and ideological reasons they had previously been condemned" (Said 2000: 382). It's a surprising way for Said to think about worldliness, to argue that politics and ideology can be overcome through the intimacy of engaged reading. To embrace rather than to exclude such works as Kanafani's requires "the scrutiny of these works *as* literature, as style, as pleasure and illumination." This perspective proves crucial for his later development of "contrapuntal" reading in *Culture and Imperialism*.

Looking back from these formulations to Said's most influential work, *Orientalism*, we may say that his task in that book was making worldly connections between scholarship and politics – and that the problem with the Orientalist tradition he is criticizing is that, despite its immense erudition, it was too confined and confining. It moved to textualize and to segregate. Said argues that in a long process of "imaginative geography" (49), parts of the world were cordoned off by Western scholars as the "Orient." This process was made possible by the facts of political and economic power: first France and Britain from the later eighteenth into the earlier twentieth centuries, and then the United States after World War II, dominated these areas. The result was a mass of profoundly specialized learning that studied – especially – the culture of Arabs in relation to schematic models rather than in relation to lived experience. Said contrasts the way Auerbach's Western philological tradition – to put it most simply, Germans studying Italy, France and Spain, but also, modern scholars studying the medieval world and, in some important cases, Jews studying Christians – used their distance from the materials studied to reflect critically on their own culture, while Orientalists maintained a sense of superiority (258, 260). Auerbach and his fellow philologists increased the sense of human connection through their work – here Said uses the traditional world-literature value terms of "brotherhood" and "universality" (261) – while Orientalists disconnected Islam from the West.

For Said, this problem could be resolved in part methodologically. A scholarship that allowed a greater place to literature and that understood literature as connected to life would produce, in his view, a more humane learning. In the nineteenth century, Said showed graphically the extent to which Orientalist stereotypes shaped important work by Gérard de Nerval and Gustave Flaubert. Yet Said also emphasized that these great writers produced work importantly different in character from what the scholars did, because they worked Orientalist materials and perspectives into "the special structures of their personal aesthetic projects" (181). They imaginatively inhabited the "possibility" of the Orient rather than dominating or simply

depicting it. This same issue, Said argues, limited American social-scientific area study of the Middle East in later years. The American scholars' "avoidance of literature" meant that their analyses of "'attitudes,' 'trends,' and statistics" were "dehumanized" (291). In contrast, "Since an Arab poet or novelist – and there are many – writes of his experience, of his values, of his humanity … he effectively disrupts the various patterns … by which the Orient is represented. A literary text speaks more or less directly of a living reality." Said's point is not at all that only creative writers can grasp life in their works but rather that scholars now must learn, as Auerbach did, to read others in their full humanity. The continuing force of Said's critique, and the value of his proposed solution, may be registered forcibly in the everyday bafflement of Americans concerning Iraqis and Afghans and Iranians and Pakistanis, human beings whose homelands are too often known to Americans only as our theaters of war.

For Said to write *Orientalism* was a worldly project, not only in connecting erudition to politics but also in making the work of arcane specialists known and debatable in a far larger community. In a positive sense that Said took from R.P. Blackmur, it was "amateur" work, performed by a critical reader, not an accredited Oriental specialist, and published by a quality trade press, not a university press. Even so, its challenge to the field stung. Specialists complained that by emphasizing England and France, nearly omitting the German Orientalists, Said made the case too easy for himself, since Germany did not have imperial control in Asia or North Africa. Others asked how can one generalize about studies of the Orient and have almost nothing to say about India or East Asia? Among those nearer to Said's own intellectual and political preferences, some found the book too closely concerned with textual matters, duplicating in itself the choice it criticized in others. Yet the book has remained continuously in print – far longer than most books by professors – and its impact has changed not only the study of the Arab world but the very disciplines of anthropology, history, and literary study.

The intricate complication of Said's thinking means that the high value accorded to literature in *Orientalism* does not simply prevail. In *The World, the Text, and the Critic* the title essay is preceded by an introduction which highlights a new term: "secular criticism." In effect, *secular* and *worldly* can be traded off as glosses on each other. Auerbach's first book is titled in English, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World* (*Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* 1929, trans. 1961; Said later commented that *secular* may have diminished the concreteness of the more literal *earthly*. See Said 2003a: xi). In Said's usage, both *worldly* and *secular* oppose any way of seeing or saying things that isolates, venerates, or idealizes. His terms both aim to unsettle. The privilege accorded literature in *Orientalism* does not extend to the development of twentieth-century Western literary study, which becomes far too much like the religious order that it began by departing from. One term Said uses for this neo-religious exclusionary order is *system*. Worldly, secular criticism must be anti-systemic, alert to "events, heterogeneous and unorthodox social configurations, human beings and texts disputing the … sovereign methodology of system" (Said 1983: 23). These anti-systemic elements will typically be "nonhumanistic, nonliterary, and non-European" (22). Yet if the value of literature, which, overall, Said upholds throughout his career, can be thus put under pressure, the very notion of the secular itself is no

sooner put forward, and it remains crucial for Said, than it, too, is shown from another side.

In "The World, the Text, and the Critic" Said sketches a momentous process by which the West's secular turn – in the sense of loosening the hold of religious authority – helped to produce the structure by which Orientalism held its objects in place. As Western philology called into question the divine origin of language (see Holquist in this volume), it made possible a standpoint from which an Orientalist scholar such as Ernest Renan could cast doubt on the "old hierarchy of sacred Semitic texts," such as the Torah and the Qur'an. Just at the time that Europe was colonizing the rest of the world, "the passing of divine authority enables the appearance of European ethnocentrism, by which the methods and the discourse of Western scholarship confine inferior non-European cultures to a position of subordination" (Said 1983: 47). Like Friedrich Nietzsche in the nineteenth century and Nietzsche's later French follower Michel Foucault, Said emphasizes both knowledge and speech as relationships shaped by inequalities of power, but he diverged from Foucault by not making power the last word. Said agreed with the German Jewish critic Walter Benjamin – whom we know now to have been a schoolmate and neighbor of Erich Auerbach – that "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (quoted in Said 1993: 309). But in the face of this fact, Said refused to retreat into either irony or horror. As with his long struggle on behalf of justice for Palestinians, he continued to hope and to seek the best way of dealing with facts.

*Culture and Imperialism* depends, as did *Orientalism*, on linking aspects of life usually kept apart, but it establishes a much larger scale of interaction. The two key terms of the title are set in counterpoint – a metaphor Said takes from music – and the critical practice of the book Said calls "contrapuntal." This contrapuntal practice, setting into relationship to each other metropolitan culture and the cultural practices of the dominated periphery, offers an alternative to the long-established traditions of Comparative Literature that had developed in the century following from Goethe's conception of *Weltliteratur*. Said argues that these traditions and practices had always either explicitly or implicitly suffered from a shortcoming: "The genuinely profound scholarship of the people who believed in and practiced *Weltliteratur* implied the extraordinary privilege of an observer located in the West who could actually survey the world's literary output with a sovereign detachment" (Said 1993: 48). Against Goethe, Said turned to the geographical perspective of the Italian radical activist and thinker Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), whose work highlights geography and the struggle over space. This spatial problematic allows for the interactive movement from which Said builds his critical counterpoint.

In the first place, Said shows that such fundamental cultural institutions of Europe's great bourgeois culture as the novel and opera take part in "structures of attitude and reference" (52) that arise from overseas empire and that help it to continue. The discussion that has provoked the most controversy involves Said's reading Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* in relation to slavery in the West Indies. Said makes integral to his interpretation the fact that the novel reports on Sir Thomas Bertram's leaving his English residence in order to see to affairs on his plantation in Antigua. So it's not that Said can be accused of making things up. The controversy springs

from the fundamental critical question of what counts. The established tradition of Austen criticism had judged unimportant the political economy of slavery, which sustained a refined sensibility within a limited social sector and, in the case of Austen herself, remarkable brilliance of language and vision. For Said, the possibility of bringing into relationship elements of human life that had been kept apart from each other is a great triumph, bringing with it both political and aesthetic benefit. Imperialism itself could count as one of its achievements "to bring the world closer together" (Said 1993: xxi), and Said asserts that current interest in imperial culture must not be understood as "retrospective vindictiveness" but rather as arising from a "need for closer links and connections."

By the time Said wrote *Culture and Imperialism*, there had already emerged, in the wake of *Orientalism*, a substantial body of work understood as "postcolonial," which saw its mission as exposing the evils of empire, of which there certainly were many. Nonetheless, Said did not understand such work as fulfilling the responsibility of critics and intellectuals. In politics, it may be necessary to practice intransigent opposition, to choose sides, but in culture, he thought it better to work with both sides, not only to denounce barbarism but also to praise civilization. So he concluded his extended discussion of Austen with a rebuke to what he called "the politics of blame":

> It would be silly to expect Jane Austen to treat slavery with anything like the passion of an abolitionist or a newly liberated slave. Yet what I have called the rhetoric of blame so often now employed by subaltern, minority, or disadvantaged voices, attacks her and others like her, retrospectively, for being white, privileged, insensitive, complicit. Yes, Austen belonged to a slave-owning society, but do we therefore jettison her novels as so many trivial exercises in aesthetic frumpery? Not at all, I would argue, if we take seriously our intellectual and interpretative vocation to make connections, to deal with as much of the evidence as possible … above all to see complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated, or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history.
>
> (Said 1993: 96).

The discussions of "Jane Austen and Empire" or of "The Pleasures of Imperialism" in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* form only a portion of *Culture and Imperialism*. Set against chapter 2, "Consolidated Vision," which treats the metropolitan imperialists, comes chapter 3, "Resistance and Opposition," which treats non-metropolitan, anti-imperial writers, those who "write back." Among the memorable discussions in this section that bear most directly on thinking about world literature, Said treats African novelists who re-write Conrad's river from "Heart of Darkness," including the Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *The River Between* (1965) and the Sudanese Tayeb Salih in *Season of Migration to the North* (originally in Arabic, *Mawsim al-Hijra ila ash-Shamal*, 1966). He then considers New World revisions of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, especially by dramatists and critics from the Caribbean, such as Aimé Césaire and George Lamming, who allot to Caliban privilege as a figure of the indigene, who must therefore be reassessed.

Just as Said deeply complicated and enriched the canonical status of Jane Austen, so he also tampers with the canonical status of William Butler Yeats. By seeing Yeats as the great poet of Irish decolonization, after independence was achieved in 1922, Said transforms the tendency of modernism and modernist studies to aesthetic enclosure. He puts Yeats into intense critical dialogue with the Chilean Pablo Neruda, the Martinican Aimé Césaire, and even the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish, in his "renderings of violence, of the overwhelming suddenness and surprise of historical events, of politics and poetry as opposed to violence and guns … of the search for respites after the last border has been crossed, the last sky flown in" (Said 1993: 232). The rapid referential richness of this whole third section of the book points to authors and texts that have come to form the canon of postcolonial studies, but Said's concern is more in the spirit of bringing together the parts of a fractured world. This brings us close to what it might mean to think of him in the context of world literature. Later scholars have pursued paths that Said opened but did not follow far, acknowledging his temperamental preference for older Western masterpieces. See Herbert Lindenberger's astute overview "from Said to postcolonialism," which discusses Emily Apter, Vilashini Cooppan, and Aamir Mufti, all of whom have since produced further important work.

As Said summarizes his view in the final chapter of *Culture and Imperialism*,

> Once we accept the actual configuration of literary experiences overlapping with one another and interdependent, despite national boundaries and coercively legislated national autonomies, history and geography are transfigured in new maps … in new types of connections. Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates who are dispossessed and expatriated, becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories, however much its loss and sadness should be acknowledged.
>
> (Said 1993: 317)

Only in this context, Said asserts, can such a "configuration" as "'world literature' … have any meaning at all."

Said's passion for counterpoint, his commitment to grasping as much as possible and not enclosing or isolating the valuable accomplishments of human beings, means that his views on any subject, especially so complex and contentious a subject as world literature, will be hard to pin down simply. As a teacher, he explained to an interviewer, "It's important, every so often, to bring in a book that you totally admire, and yet completely understand its limitations" (Said 2001: 90). All that we do exists within our condition as human beings in the world. Secular criticism means that we will not claim for any work, however great, however much we love it, that it transcends that human condition; as a worldly performance, it will have limitations, which the responsible intellectual must understand, together with understanding what makes it great and wonderful. Said applied the same standard even to the critics whom he always named with admiration and used as examples for the best sort of work – Erich Auerbach, but also Theodor Adorno and R.P. Blackmur. As he told an interviewer, in "every one … I could locate … a place in their texts in

which they are ethnocentric to a fault" (Said 2001: 127). In the case of Auerbach, Said reflects that he translated "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" because "it seemed to me so interesting a reflection on his own work but also so pessimistic about the onset of all these 'new' languages and cultures, most of them non-European, that he had nothing to say about." Said summarizes his relation to these great predecessors: "I'm extending their work into areas they avoid by adapting some of their modes of examination, their attention to texts, their *care*."

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# 14
# PASCALE CASANOVA AND THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

*Helena Carvalhão Buescu*

The concept and term "Republic of Letters" have known renewed interest in recent years, thanks to the publication of various works on the subject, most notably Pascale Casanova's *La République Mondiale des Lettres* ((Casanova 1999); see also Fumaroli 1988; Goodman 1994; Goldgar 1995; Bots and Waquet 1997; Burke 1999; Eskildsen 2004). There are indeed interesting points of connection between the way world literature is being conceived nowadays and the historical notion of *Respublica Litterarum*. Still, one also has to be aware that there are substantial differences, so as not to extrapolate unduly, or even deny historical substance to the two concepts. The contours as well as the differences of such relations are the subject of this contribution.

The right place to start is to recognize that, if we are to understand the meaning and the limitations of the Republic of Letters for the present interest in world literature, we have to establish the moments in history that bear a significance to this relation, and trace some of the ambiguities in the different uses of the term that might hinder such historical awareness. As we shall see, this has been precisely the case for some of the contemporary use of the expression.

Marc Fumaroli (1988: 137) thinks it significant that the coining and early use of the term "*Respublica Litterarum*" in the early fifteenth century are linked to the discovery of several ancient manuscripts, among them Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, by the humanist Poggio Bracciolini. Francesco Barbaro, the first to actually use the expression, in 1417, in a letter to Poggio congratulating him on these discoveries, already implies the idea of a community of lettered men, going back in time (the manuscripts discovered) and stretching into the future (their availability to others). From its earliest stages, then, the Republic of Letters stresses different aspects that we might take into account. Among these is the nonexistence of national borders in the consideration of such a republic, and also the symbolic fact that it is first used in the context of a correspondence, and that it concerns the awareness of intellectual continuities. From its inception, the concept thus points to communal intellectual goods and practices that are or may be shared. Fumaroli further argues that the coining of such an expression may be understood as a variation of Saint Augustine's notion of *Respublica Christiana*, and therefore as an agreement between like minds

(138). Others (Burke 1999; Bregoli 2007) have also made the point of a connection between the Republic of Letters and the heated religious debates that occurred all over Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The fact that some of the major names in the Republic of Letters are Erasmus, Pierre Bayle, and afterwards even Voltaire, might give us cause to ponder on the significance of such a relation.

Critical opinion seems to be united in positing a close connection between the invention and spread of the printing press and the very sense of a wider intellectual and scholarly community. The *Journal des Savants* (1665) is usually considered to be the first example of a learned journal, and Pierre Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1684) came off the press a bare twenty years later. Circulation and public reading, through the press, certainly contributed to the establishment of a community of readers whose self-awareness also relied, among other things, on a modern commodity such as the journal. This is why Goldgar (1995:31) stresses the importance of the role of the *intermediary*. In the realm of the Republic of Letters we are no longer speaking about scholars who work on a purely individual basis. On the contrary, they rely on their peers to pursue their intellectual and scholarly endeavors. In this respect, the Republic of Letters is also a social community, and it is only logical that all forms of cultural exchange are at the very centre of its development, and that correspondence, journals, and later on "salons" play such an important role in it (Lilti (n.d.) is quite adamant, though, that the "salons" are a very different thing from the Republic of Letters, and the two should not be conflated).

Fumaroli underlines that what is at stake in the historical Republic of Letters is the development of a "philosophical aristocracy," a community ruled by "a severe and subtle cooption" (1988: 133). Transnational, yet always within a European context, it aims to establish a critical and institutionally recognizable "scientific and philosophical community" (135). Dialogue is the touchstone of this republic, and its main forms are correspondence and conversation.

At this point, though, we should ask what exactly is meant by the "letters" in "the Republic of Letters." General consensus has it that it does not cover the same content as the (later) concept of "literature." For Burke, as of the fifteenth century, the term "letters" refers to what we would now call "learning" (1999: 8). By proposing to view this republic as one type of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" (9) – a view shared by Eskildsen (2004) – Burke also points out the invisible as well as transnational character of such a community, rooted in consensual practices, and therefore in dialogue, "intellectual equity," and "scholarly cooperation" (8). His view of the academies founded from the fifteenth century onwards "as so many mini-republics, each with its own written constitution," signals "a dream of unity in a divided Europe" (9). No wonder, then, that Voltaire "wrote of 'une république immense d'esprits cultivés'" (9).

Burke proposes seven types of practice through which the Republic of Letters developed from Erasmus to Voltaire: invitations to foreign scholars, the internationalization of libraries (Bregoli's analysis of Joseph Attias' library is a remarkable example), correspondence, visits to famous scholars as part of the practice of travel, the *album amicorum*, the learned society, and the learned journal (5).

Lilti (n.d.), following Fumaroli, contends that the notion "has a double meaning: on the one hand, the Republic of Letters is a historiographical tool to refer to networks of scholars organized around academic institutions, learned journals, informal gatherings and epistolary exchanges; on the other hand, it is the normative ideal of a community of scholars and writers who have egalitarian and personal relationships, autonomous from political power, from religious solidarities and from national identities" (no pagination).

We should be aware of this distinction, so that some of the implications of contemporary uses of the notion may be understood and handled carefully. In any case, and even if its participants strove for consensus, the Republic of Letters had its own battles to fight, first and foremost that between "ancients and moderns" (Burke 1999: 12). Burke illustrates the several kinds of borders operative in the republic, giving the examples of Eastern Europeans (geographic divide), women (gender divide), and natural philosophers (scientific divide). The same issue is also examined by Bots and Waquet (1997), as they stress both commonality and demarcation from outsiders as two of the main characteristics of the Republic of Letters. There is certainly a point to be made that this imaginary republic often – though by no means always – saw itself as limited to Western Europe, to men, and to natural philosophers.

This "strange imaginary land, one that had few of the distinctive marks by which we usually identify a state" (Grafton 2009a), is explicitly recognized as such by several of its citizens, among them Noël d'Argonne, whose definition is often quoted:

> The Republic of Letters is of very ancient origin … It embraces the whole world and is composed of all nationalities, all social classes, all ages and both sexes … All languages, ancient as well as modern, are spoken. The arts are joined to letters, and artisans also have their place in it … Praise and honor are awarded by popular acclaim.
>
> (Noël d'Argonne, *Mélanges d'histoire et de littérature, recueillis par M. de Vigneul-Marville*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1699–1700), quoted in Dibon 1978: 43)

This popular acclaim, coming as it does from the community of scholars who recognize one another, must also be seen as a form of self-legitimization. This is clearly the case with one of the most prominent citizens of the republic, Pierre Bayle, who in 1684 founded the journal *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, a central piece in the construction (or perhaps, rather, the institutionalization) of the republic. Cultural exchange, taking place through the journal, was, in Bayle's view, intended to further democratization, even perhaps (an ideal form of) egalitarianism – and he certainly saw it as a political weapon in the religious conflicts in which he took so active a part. That is why the Republic of Letters is not only about the nature of letters, but about forms of cultural exchange and sociability as well. And it is also about the nature of argumentative truth as a result of critical thought.

A point to be stressed is the discursive diversity implied by the notion of letters, and hence its non-coincidence with the notion of literature. This is important to understand, as Pascale Casanova's recent use of the concept of the Republic of Letters rests upon its misapprehension. The republic included not only what came to be

known as "belles-lettres" and then "littérature," but also different forms of scholarly and intellectual exchange, such as correspondence, historiography, and scientific exchange (before modern specialization took over, cf. Grafton 2009a). The principles of transnationality, transhistoricity, and discursive diversity are central to the republic. The concept of letters is wider and more encompassing than the concept of literature, in terms of substance as well as of geographical, historical, cultural, and linguistic characteristics (the existence of a common language, Latin, is of central consideration at least up to the mid-seventeenth century).

The Portuguese writer Dom Francisco Manuel de Melo and the Spaniard Diego de Saavedra Fajardo are two major examples of such diversity. *La República Literaria*, a satire by Saavedra Fajardo, appeared in 1655 (though actually there is some doubt as to whether Saavedra is in fact the author of the volume, cf. Blecua 1984). The book stages an imaginary state formed by a great diversity of artists and writers, writing and reading in a variety of manners, the very proliferation of which is critically assessed (Colomès 1970; Blecua 1984; Serra 1999). Francisco Manuel de Melo, in 1657, published his dialogue *Hospital das Letras*, "a book of books" (Serra 1999, XLII), in which Cervantes, Camões, and Ariosto, along with many other literary authors, rub shoulders with authors of political treatises, mirrors of princes, moral reflections, and history writings. Not only are the genres of discourse varied, there is also no "national" awareness in writings such as these. We should keep these two points fully in mind when we turn to Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (1999, in French; 2004, English translation).

Casanova starts from the concept of nation and builds her argument on the idea that the dynamics of the literary system may be fully explained through the rivalries and competitions between nations and their national literatures (one per nation). Such a line of reasoning had already been at least partially invalidated by Dena Goodman in 1994, when she argued that the construction, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of France (and Paris) as the model for polite and civilized society, offered a solution for the opposition between nation and cosmopolitanism: French men of letters saw themselves as both patriots *and* cosmopolitans.

Casanova's nationalistic and competitive model is rightfully criticized by Prendergast (2004) as an oversimplification based on the reduction of "literary 'internationalism' [ … ] to relations of inter-national competition" (viii). He is right again when he points out that Casanova's use of the expression "republic of letters" is what he calls "an intellectual non-starter" (11) – with huge consequences, given the wide audience the book has elicited. In fact, Casanova establishes no connection between the historical "Republic of Letters" and what she considers "the World Republic of Letters," even if translation plays a crucial role in her analysis of literary capital and its international dynamics, as was also the case with the historical Republic of Letters. The second part of her book, in which historically situated case-studies are at the center of reflection, does achieve a more complex picture, precisely because Paris ceases to be the only "Greenwich Mean Time" by which literary circulation is measured.

Moreover, the differences between the concepts of Republic of Letters and the World Republic of Letters are indelible, and should not be overlooked. One of them, as we have seen, implies the non-coincidence between "letters" and

"literature," and does not presuppose any national, much less nationalist, model. Casanova's description, being all about competitions and rivalries between nations, distorts the tradition of that "imaginary and transnational state" that the Republic of Letters constituted. Putting aside completely the conceptual implications of the term she chooses as her foundation (neither Erasmus, nor even Bayle, although he was French, are ever mentioned), Casanova dislocates her inquiry into the field of national literatures, in the modern (and quite recent) sense of the term, which are seen as the obvious source of any Republic of Letters, and all the more of the World Republic of Letters.

*The World Republic of Letters* is in fact an explicit attempt at both an international literary criticism and a description of a certain type of world literature (hence the coupling of the term "world" with the received "Republic of Letters"). The same model of competition and rivalry is taken up again by Casanova in later contributions (2009), in which her starting (and arrival) point is invariably the story of literary Europe as that of the continuing struggles and power relations between its different national literatures. What prevails is a French point of view, adopted for a French audience for which it was also originally intended, an intention that circumscribes the notions of world and of republic. The translation and dissemination of Casanova's book into other languages and loci screens out those circumscriptions, thus projecting a decidedly French world and a French republic onto the world at large. For instance, the official adoption of the vernacular in France in political documents (1539) was anticipated by more than two centuries by a similar Portuguese ordinance in 1296 by the king Dom Dinis, which goes a long way to dispute Casanova's decision to date the adoption of the vernacular from the sixteenth century onwards. Nor is her dismissal of Yunus Emre's thirteenth-/fourteenth-century poetry in the Turkish vernacular, as opposed to the official language of poetry at the time (Persian), or her overlooking of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (1302–5) convincing in this respect. Because only post-sixteenth-century facts seem to be admissible, then, the full world, in *The World Republic of Letters*, comes into view only with postcolonialism – while, for instance, such late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century grammarians as Antonio de Nebrija, in Spain, or João de Barros, in Portugal, had already been quite involved with the European representation of non-European languages (Buescu 1983).

Both the notions of a Republic of Letters and of a *World* Republic of Letters, then, are misrepresented in Casanova's book. The work's wide range of analysis, and especially of case studies, is impressive, and Casanova's argument for the integrated study of confrontation in the literary arena opens up new perspectives. But her point of departure describes an ideal single vantage point (France and, more specifically, Paris) from which the "figure in the carpet" (to use the metaphor she borrows from Henry James) might be understood, whereas the reality is that different vantage points generate different competing descriptions (Bregoli 2007; Orsini 2004) and multiple worlds. If so, one must also recognize that there are numerous (especially non-European) world descriptions of the literary field in which Paris appears as a distant border. Thus, this monosystemic and evolutionary description of the literary system, where national competition produces only the *replacement* of one capital by another (Paris perhaps by London and then by New York), may well offer a dynamic

view of the international literary space, but it hardly elucidates how these dynamics are historically much more complex than a mere binary distinction between capital and provinces/peripheries.

Among these peripheries, strategic differences, parallels, or relations also play a crucial role, and should not be overlooked (see, for the Indian case, the convincing argument made by Orsini (2004)). Likewise, the definitions of the capital and its *replacements/deplacements* are open to debate. To say that only after decolonization "countries in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Asia demanded access to literary legitimacy and existence" (Casanova 2004, 11) is, if nothing else, to arbitrarily put aside traditions that may not have been recognized as hegemonic by *national* agendas in Europe, but that were still fundamental, such as the Arab one.

This does not amount to saying that a peaceful description of a "common" literary universe is an alternative, as was certainly the risk with more conservative idealizations of the Republic of Letters. In this respect, Casanova's book is a landmark for a completely different picture of the literary system, and it is not hard to understand why its roots may be found in Bourdieu's and also in Even-Zohar's theories. As the book progresses, and Casanova seems less taken with the need to centre everything on Paris, it is the impressive range of the case studies she puts forward, and the complexity of their analysis, that makes for the real impact of the volume. When historical analysis, especially of the twentieth century, is at the centre of her thoughts, her argument becomes ever more solid (even if open to debate), and it is therefore not surprising that it is in the chapters dealing directly with translation that the reader finds the most convincing arguments in favour of a World Republic of Letters. In so doing, Casanova joins forces with the likes of Emily Apter and David Damrosch, as they all stress the centrality of translation for any concept of world literature that does not reduce itself to the sum of different (inter-)national texts.

Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (2008) adds a further useful point to the model of a World Republic of Letters, linking the tradition of the Republic of Letters with the present concerns about world literature, when he insists on what he calls "shifting focal points" (36ff.) for the consideration of world literature. He underlines the diversity and variability of literary (sub-)centres in the supranational literary panorama. This is also a claim that has major consequences for how nationalism and cosmopolitanism come to be viewed, and Roberto Dainotto's contribution in *Europe (in Theory)* is, in this perspective, decisive: different historical links and relations produce radically different perceptions and self-perceptions in the "concert of nations."

To speak even of Europe without taking into consideration these differences, or the "shifting focal points" that are an integral part of its history, is to miss an important condition of its (self-)awareness. This is an observation that is naturally also valid in a wider context, as Kate McInturff (2003) notes when she points out the competing claims of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in the evolution of the notion of world literature, and the way it may be seen as a differentiating process with respect to the Republic of Letters. The issue, however, is that the slide from a republic made up of singular citizens to a confederation composed of nations clearly points to a major difference in the awareness of how the relations between "letters"

and "literatures" come to be grounded. McInturff's analysis of critics such as Schlegel, Arnold, Taine, and others is quite enlightening in this respect, and it helps us to understand how nationalistic (as well as imperial) criteria were gradually introduced into the reflection both on national literatures and on World Literature.

It is in this context that we may consider yet another interesting proposal linking the Republic of Letters to our present concerns on world literature, coming from the Uruguayan critic and philosopher Angel Rama (1984). His proposal may offer a significant alternative model for national rivalry and competition. Another advantage of Rama's view is that he is able to integrate a non-European (in this case, Latin American) vantage point *before* the rise of postcolonialism, and he is therefore able to offer a more encompassing perspective of different models of "letters" and their symbolic as well as political role.

Rama's work, entitled *La Ciudad Letrada* (*The Lettered City*) was published posthumously in 1984. The shift from the more abstract idea of a "republic of letters" to the historically more concrete notion of "the lettered city" allows Rama to describe power relations between the nations of the Iberian Peninsula and their Latin American colonies, as well as the centrality of the role that the "letrados," the lettered men, played in the urban culture of the New World. Taking his theoretical cue from Foucault, Rama calls our attention to the fact that the New World suddenly offered to the Europeans what seemed to be a unique chance of reconfiguring an already ordered and homogeneous world. Its paradigmatic model was naturally the city, which became, in Brazil and Latin America at large, the site where predefined models of a certain order found their roots – either in architecture or urbanism, or in the place that writing came to have in the imperial design.

The special place that the learned and lettered classes had as the ordering power of and in the (new) city is the main subject of Rama's ground-breaking reflection. The apex of the city of letters as such is situated between the beginning of the decline of the religious orders (especially the Franciscans) and the progressive laicization of the eighteenth century, and is therefore an avatar of the Baroque city itself. Rama convincingly argues that the monopoly of the word and of writing led to the institutionalization of a specific class that ruled over the city by way of a learned cultural model, able to respond to the demands of a huge colonial administration and what was seen as the task of evangelization. To be learned in an illiterate society led to the professionalization of those who held the power to use the word. In Latin America, this became a crucial tool to limit the primitive "chaos," build urban centres, and ensure that the administrative relations between colony and colonial power were as swift and functional as they needed to be.

The role of the modern intellectual in the wake of the twentieth century and the concurrent ideological configuration of modern space (and the modern lettered city in particular) are decisive points in Rama's argument, and merit our attention in the context of the present reflection. Rama stresses how all this is not about literature alone, as it comprises also legislative writing, choices about which language to use and recognize, and the regulation of social behavior, among other things. But then, as we have seen, neither was the Republic of Letters solely about literature *stricto sensu*. The same kind of understanding lies at the origin of a project being developed at Stanford University, entitled "Mapping the Republic of Letters"

(http://republicofletters.stanford.edu/), focusing on correspondence in order to understand "the exchange and dissemination of knowledge on a global scale." The connection being made with Habermas' theories and the rise of the public sphere in the eighteenth century again highlights some of the main issues I have been arguing with regard to the Republic of Letters, its historical fluctuations and different configurations.

Anne Goldgar (1995) challenged the traditional view of a substantive content in the notion of the Republic of Letters. Her argument was that the most important issue to take into account was the very sense of community proposed, and this also accounted, in her perspective, for a major conservative characteristic of such a community (as opposed to what she sees as the more subversive strata of the *philosophes*). Even if one accepts that what holds together the Republic of Letters, up to the eighteenth century, is a sense of a community strongly rooted in scholarly knowledge and intellectual self-awareness, one must also acknowledge the important step it took towards a certain democratization of cultural capital. It is, to a certain extent, an idealization to posit the Republic of Letters as broadly bringing together what otherwise class, nationality, and religion would have divided – yet there is no denying that it also represents the awareness of what a modern republic, or city, might be. On the one hand, it is a self-contained system. On the other hand, it represents a dynamic process that runs according to its own cultural and symbolic agenda.

The debate on the (historical) Republic of Letters must also be understood in the light of what would now be called the legitimation of literature or, more amply, the legitimacy of humanist learning ("letters"). It is about the establishment of a community of scholars and thinkers that sees itself as potentially free of social and political pressures, and therefore in a position to find in such freedom its own legitimacy. Ideally, perhaps, the citizen of such a republic should be able to find an alternative space in which to develop his or her citizenship (see Eskildsen (2004) on the German scholar Thomasius). As it happened, however, the more historical and politicized model of the Republic of Letters led, according to Eskildsen, to its decline, as the institutional establishment of the republic came to be considered a hindrance to intellectual and scholarly advancement.

Finally, some broad questions and characteristics may help us to understand how the notion and history of the Republic of Letters may contribute to our present concerns with world literature. I would like to mention five. First, the characterization of the Republic of Letters as an imaginary space with transnationality as the axis of its constitution. We may want to take *cum grano salis* such descriptions as seem to think about literature on the sole basis of national representation. Second, the more ample and more diversified notion of letters versus our modern definition of literature as creative writing. The Republic of Letters has an inclusive approach: political and philosophical treatises, historiography, correspondence, dialogues. The specialization of knowledge and discourses is not at the centre of the Republic of Letters' concerns. Third, its European dimension. The Republic of Letters, although it is not constituted on a national basis, does not have a world scope, and is therefore not to be made to coincide with Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur*, or with our present conception of it. Fourth, the role of mediators and of different kinds of mediation in the

construction of such a republic, from learned journals to correspondence to travel. These forms of mediation might find modern equivalents in what James English has called "the economy of prestige" (prizes, awards, and other forms of circulation of cultural value). Finally, there is the importance of co-optation and scholarly cooperation. Such a model offers a mitigating view to the model of rivalry and competition proposed by Casanova. While there is much to say about rivalries and dissensions within the literary space, descriptions that rely on them to explain literary dynamics, be they individual (Harold Bloom) or group-based (Casanova), seem to by-pass important alternative models of literary relations. At the very least, the history of the Republic of Letters offers the possibility of integrating consensual as well as argumentative processes within the scope of a dynamic model.

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# 15
# FRANCO MORETTI AND THE GLOBAL WAVE OF THE NOVEL

*Mads Rosendahl Thomsen*

Franco Moretti's article from 2000 "Conjectures on World Literature" is one of the most referred-to texts of the past two decades with respect to the renewed wave of interest in world literature. The many references to Moretti's take on world literature stand in contrast to the relatively few articles he has devoted to the subject. "More Conjectures," from 2003, answers some of his critics, while "Evolution, World-systems, *Weltliteratur*," from 2006, provides a nuanced reflection on the Darwinian inspiration. Since then Moretti has turned away from the use of "world literature" as a concept in his writings.

At the same time it may be argued that most of Moretti's work deals with the "world" and "literature." The complex economical and cultural systems that shape literature form a dominant theme in the early book *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1988) and *The Way of the World* (1987); the idea of a world system is used in *Modern Epic* (1996) and onwards; the diffusion of works in a geography of literature is discussed in *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (1998); and most notably he presents the novel as the most significant global genre that has evolved in the history of literature, as is thoroughly traced in the edited volumes of *The Novel* (Moretti 2006b, 2006c).

Moretti's central views on world literature are therefore relatively accessible, while their many implications for the study of literature may be found throughout his works, adding a variety of nuances that, if not controversial, at least demonstrate his breadth and originality, and range from literary sociology to evolutionary theory (e.g. Spivak 2003: 106).

One notable aspect of Moretti's approach, evident in "Conjectures on World Literature" is his acknowledgment that doing serious work on world literature is often hampered because of the sheer extent of the subject matter. As he notes, it would always be good to read more, but in reality even surveying a few national literatures is more than most people can handle (Moretti 2000a: 55). Moretti's provocative concept of "distant reading" is one suggestion for dealing with this complexity, and it is an approach that is often referred to as going against the grain of what usually constitutes a core value in literary studies, namely close reading.

Although Moretti himself can be an excellent close reader of canonical works in a variety of genres (e.g. Moretti 1987), his main interest does not lie in explaining or understanding the riddles and particularities of single works, but in the study of genres and trying to understand how literary cultures evolve and, perhaps most importantly in this context, how the dynamics of the world literary system change national literary cultures. For Moretti, readings of individual works are not enough to understand patterns in the selections made by all the actors in the world literary system – all kinds of readers, publishers, critics, academics, librarians, and so on and so forth – all of whom contribute to the complexity and variety of literature.

It is also important to note that while Moretti may abandon close reading when positioning his article on the study of world literature, he does not succumb to a sociology of literature that does not take literary form into account. Rather, he underlines how important techniques and genres are for the transformation of literary cultures (Moretti 2000a: 57). The link between literary form and sociology has been a recurrent theme throughout his work, with an emphasis on the novel of the nineteenth century (Moretti 1996: 6). The evolution of literature on a systemic level and the ability of literary cultures to change are thus issues of central interest for Moretti:

> Personally, I am fascinated by this encounter of the formal and the quantitative. Let me give you an example: all literary scholars analyse stylistic structures – free indirect style, the stream of consciousness, melodramatic excess, whatever. But it's striking how little we actually know about the genesis of these forms. Once they're there, we know what to do; but how did they get there in the first place?
>
> (Moretti 2008: 114)

Moretti's work on world literature in many ways stands in contrast to that of David Damrosch, who in *What Is World Literature?* suggests that scholars look for constellations of singular works across cultures (Damrosch 2003: 281) rather than for the influence of genres. What both writers agree on, and what has made their works standard reference points during the current revival of interest in world literature as a research and teaching paradigm, is the need to reformulate world literature as an approach or a problem rather than to stick with traditional definitions of world literature as either a canon of works or an indiscriminate idea encompassing all the world's literature. They both emphasize the need for collective work, and an interest in the development of new approaches that are viable for both research and teaching is at the core of both their writings, even though their personal approaches may differ. Moretti, for example, uses the literary market as a means for analysis of the literary field, while Damrosch prefers to consider the teaching of literature within academia.

In what follows the key concepts of Moretti's approach to world literature will be presented, along with some of the criticism it has accrued. The concepts in question are center–periphery, waves and trees, evolution, and distant reading, and the discussion will conclude with further perspectives that can be drawn from Moretti's work on world literature.

## Center–periphery and the world system

Moretti draws on the tradition of Goethe and Marx to see world literature as one, along with the developments of Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of a world system, and Itamar Even-Zohar's literary systems theory in order to find a basis for formulating relations of dominance between the different areas of the system. Like the political world and the world market, world literature is seen as one system, albeit one that is characterized by difference and unequal conditions for exercising influence. Moretti's emphasis on certain streams of cultural capital qualifies the likelihood of influence, and it is backed by empirical studies in, for example, *Atlas of the European Novel* (1998), in which the influence of the English and French novels throughout Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century is demonstrated by surveys into translations, library acquisitions, etc.

It is hard to disagree with the general premise that larger nations have an unequal influence over smaller ones, and that the traditional central literatures – from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and later on the USA – have long had a major influence on what then becomes a periphery. The question is rather how literary criticism and history should deal with these dynamics.

One critique of Moretti's view is that he overstates the influence of the market. Certainly, there is too little emphasis on the large quantities of works that constitute popular genres at a given time and which provided the context within which there developed the works that are now viewed as stand-alone masterpieces. Moretti also often fails to account for the longer development of literary history as something that provides a long life for certain works and a short one for others. In "The Slaughterhouse of Literature", like "Conjectures on World Literature" published in 2000, he considers the vast masses of unread literature as a problem for literary history, because almost all literature does not become a part of literary history (Moretti 2000b: 207).

There is a difference between understanding a literary culture's configuration at a given time and understanding why literary history over time has been shaped as it is. Moretti's approach is aimed at the often untold stories of literary evolution. In "The Slaughterhouse of Literature" he highlights the use of the clue as a device in the fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle (Moretti 2000b: 214), whereas *Modern Epic* has a chapter devoted to the development of "stream-of-consciousness" in order to show that this technique did not arise out of the blue in the 1910s and 1920s (Moretti 1996: 168ff). However, these studies were undertaken within the sphere of Western literature. The plea for distant reading comes in acknowledging the difficulties of acquiring intimate knowledge of the finer distinctions in the field of world literature, where other choices have to be made.

## Waves, trees and the dominance of the novel

In "Conjectures on World Literature" Moretti considers two ways of thinking about literary history. One focuses on local differences and connects them to similar, yet different, literatures, most often with the idea of a national literature securing the

individuality of the literatures. Another way to look at literary and cultural history is to consider external influences that come from other literatures, where a certain impulse may affect many cultures in different ways. Moretti names these two models the tree, where the branches are distinct, stable and strive to uphold difference, and the wave, which produces similarity by swiping away the differences:

> trees and waves are both metaphors – but except for this, they have absolutely nothing in common. The tree describes the passage from unity to diversity: one tree, with many branches: from Indo-European, to dozens of different languages. The wave is the opposite: it observes uniformity engulfing an initial diversity: Hollywood films conquering one market after another (or English swallowing language after language). Trees need geographical *discontinuity* (in order to branch off from each other, languages must first be separated in space, just like animal species); waves dislike barriers, and thrive on geographical *continuity* (from the viewpoint of a wave, the ideal world is a pond). Trees and branches are what nation-states cling to; waves are what markets do. And so on. Nothing in common, between the two metaphors. But – *they both work*.
>
> (Moretti 2000a: 67)

A primary example of a wave, for Moretti, is the adaptation of genres (most notably the European novel) in a literary culture, first through translations, then through original composition within the literary culture molded after a foreign model, and perhaps a unique and original contribution to world literature through a local development of foreign models and local materials. Moretti argues that this process can be summed up in a number of rules of thumb:

> as if it were a *law of literary evolution*: in cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe), the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials.
>
> (Moretti 2000a: 57)

The further progression combines translations and innovation in the literary cultures in the periphery:

> second, the formal compromise is usually prepared by a massive wave of West European translations; third, the compromise itself is generally unstable (Miyoshi has a great image for this: the "impossible programme" of Japanese novels); but fourth, in those rare instances when the impossible programme succeeds, we have genuine formal revolutions.
>
> (Moretti 2000a: 58n)

Moretti has been criticized for being narrowly focused on the novel, but he defends this focus in different ways. One argument is that other genres have also exhibited

wave-like behaviour, such as the sonnet, which has had an enormous influence over the centuries (Moretti 2003: 73). Another argument comes from studies of other phenomena, such as the dominance of American film throughout the world (Moretti 2001: 90). Jonathan Arac, however, backs Moretti's focus on the novel:

> The age that invented world literature has long seemed to posterity the age of the novel. This is the justification for Franco Moretti's turning his "Conjectures on World Literature" into a case study of the novel, and it is what makes his massive edited project *Il Romanzo/The Novel* the outstanding example to date of new literary history in a global age.
>
> (Arac 2008: 757)

## Distant reading and empirical research

One of the basic ideas of Moretti's method is that in order to look widely at texts in a literary culture or genre, it is necessary to look for something specific. The clue, in the stories of Arthur Conan Doyle and his contemporaries, is one example of taking an indispensable trait drawn from a canonical material and then using it within a much wider context. Moretti is aware of some of the limitations of this approach, the most severe being that it does not account for what is interesting in stories lacking the trait (Moretti 2000b: 212). However, this approach does offer the opportunity to ask what other devices such stories use, as Moretti shows in the case of Conan Doyle's contemporaries.

However, searching for a particular trait becomes much more complicated when moving from a relatively simple question – does the detective use traces or not – to determine how certain literary forms influence one another. The intuition behind the model of foreign form, local form, and local content outlined in "Conjectures of World Literature" – which can also be understood as an imported plot, a local voice, and a local context – may help to identify patterns of translation and uses of genres, but, on the downside, the concepts eventually have to bundle very large and intangible elements of texts (Moretti 2000a: 65).

One of the central claims of Moretti's method is that abstraction is the precondition for working with larger numbers of texts, and that one has to pick a unit of analysis in order to see certain patterns. Moretti is of course aware that such selection is also a de-selection of other elements and that there will always be blind spots (Moretti 2000b: 226). The question then is whether there is a certain kind of blind spot being produced by Moretti's approach. Emily Apter has pointed out that Moretti favors narrative over linguistic engagement, but then again the plot is an element of literature that lends itself to cultural transfer much better than linguistic aspects of literature, and as Apter writes:

> Moretti's attempt to assign renewed importance to plot, character, voice, and genre as load-bearing units of global lit [*sic*] has much to recommend it, as does his political formalism in the expanded field of world-systems theory, which bluntly recognizes the uneven playing field of global symbolic capital. Like the work of Perry Anderson and other affiliates of the *New Left*

> *Review*, his macro approach is clearly indebted to Jameson's *Marxism and Form*. But it is an approach that ignores the extent to which high theory, with its internationalist circulation, already functioned as a form of distant reading. It also favors narrative over linguistic engagement, and this, I would surmise, is ultimately the dangling participle of Moretti's revamped *Weltliteratur*.
> (Apter 2003: 255–56)

A related criticism from Jale Parla is that the dominance of the English language is apparent and that Moretti, while writing on diversity, in practice is most focused on the hegemonic and unifying dimensions of the dominance of English (Parla 2004: 118). Moretti has argued that the cultural diversity that is present in the work is more important than sheer linguistic diversity, and he points as well to the fact that he draws on a wide cross-cultural range of critics (Moretti 2003: 76n). Given the dominance of English in world literature today, not least as a relay between literatures and the ability to read literature with origins in a number of languages, there seems to be a need for more emphasis on the cultural estrangement that literature produces. One argument would be that the use of genres and other techniques is what helps to overcome in some instances the very strangeness that would otherwise make the text too difficult to be appreciated by another culture (Thomsen 2008: 99ff.).

The model proposed in "Conjectures on World Literature" suggests that the mixture of foreign form, local form, and local content is the better way to describe how narrative models from the centre change foreign literatures. By looking narrowly and somewhat unsystematically, as most close readers do, they are bound to miss something in terms of contexts, the risks of presenting what was typical of the time as something unique, and a backdrop of small differences that can help to explain why certain works fare better than others in the international system and in literary history.

## Evolution

Moretti's fascination with evolution is a constant in his work, exemplified both in the addition of an essay on literary history and evolution to the second edition of *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1988) and in his 2006 article "Evolution, World-Systems, *Weltliteratur*," where he applies Darwinian principles such as selection, diversity generated by spatial separation, and refunctionalization to literary history and literary analyses. Moretti's uses of these structural elements from the natural sciences are persuasive, though most researchers are hesitant to see such transfers of terms as anything more than interesting metaphors.

Thomas O. Beebee has pointed out that there are a number of idiosyncratic choices in Moretti's own article in *The Novel*, which apparently go against the ambitions of a scientific approach to the study of literary evolution (Beebee 2008: 514–15). On a similar note, Wai Chee Dimock cautions against Moretti's

> over-commitment to general laws, to global postulates operating at some remove from the phenomenal world of particular texts. As Moretti

> forthrightly admits, what he advocates is a *paradigm* called "distant reading," so named because of its clear opposition to the better known, "close" variety. Unlike close reading, distant reading is meant to track large-scale developments; it is not meant to capture the fine print. Moretti does not worry too much about this. According to him, "if the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, less is more". Is this really true? Is the loss of the text a price worth paying in order to project literature onto a large canvas?
>
> (Dimock 2006: 90)

Literary studies without any close reading may seem very far fetched, and Moretti has of course not even hinted at that as a viable option, but neither has he provided many ideas for how a diet of close reading can be married with his ideas of distant reading. For researchers who do not feel compelled to go all the way with distant reading, there are few explicit ideas for making combinations of small-scale statistical investigations combined with analyses of texts. However, Moretti's own work does provide many examples of smaller scale, most notably in *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*, which originally was supposed to be a much larger collective project, but ended up being an inspired monograph. The use of small-scale investigations can be valuable in proving the significance of a certain formal trait or a certain pattern in a particular period, as Moretti himself has shown with the use of the clue in Sherlock Holmes or the geography of French and British literature in the nineteenth century (Moretti 1998 and 2000b).

There also seems to be a paradox in Moretti's description of his approach. On the one hand, he is a proponent of a literary history made up of related experiments, thereby supporting a pluralistic view of literature that is also inherent in the distinction between trees and waves. On the other hand, the whole idea of making collective projects supported by vast collections of data would be to get things right, and by speaking of "laws" he also suggests that this is more than experiments (Moretti 2000a: 61). Would it make sense if the outcome did not have some kind of authority along the lines of what literary history has aimed to display? Then again, Moretti continuously argues for learning from experiments and refining models if the details do not fit (Moretti 2001: 101).

## Perspectives

As mentioned earlier, Moretti's focus is, to a high degree, on the spread of genres from center to periphery, and while this movement is arguably the only movement that takes place on a global scale, it seems to miss a point described earlier in *Modern Epic*. Here Moretti suggests that the South American use of magical realism constitutes an instance of innovation in the periphery that does not come from the center (Moretti 1996: 233ff.). This kind of feed-back from periphery to center also took and takes place in the postcolonial literature.

What is even more important, and supports the perspective Moretti encourages, is that the stream of works that travel from the periphery to the traditional center

more often than not have been influenced by the wave of novelization that Moretti describes. The chances are that Japanese or Arabic literature read in the West, and read as world literature, would bear the mark of Western influence rather than being examples of "pure" local genres – for example, they would be novels informed by Western traditions rather than a less accessible poetry. Recent examples would be the works of the Japanese author Haruki Murakami and the Egyptian author of *The Yacoubian Building*, Alaa al-Aswany. So it could be said that the waves of world literature also leave behind rivers for others to sail back on.

An important note to literary history is Moretti's suggestion that there really are two kinds of world literature: one that precedes the eighteenth century and has great diversity as a result of the relatively insular conditions of local literary cultures, and one that has been unified by an international literary market and the waves of influence that dominate it (Moretti 2006a: 120). If one accepts this division, it is also crucial to embrace different methods for the study of literature before and after the coming into being of an international literary market for literature. Moretti also suggests that this divide forces one to rethink what literary history is made of in the conflict between the literature of the present and the literature of the past, and the structural differences between these.

Altogether, Franco Moretti's contribution to the theory and practice of world literature is important both for providing a new take on world literature supported by empirical data and inventive models as well as well-argued approaches to literary history, and for provoking discussion of some of the idiosyncrasies in comparative literature. Moretti's approach is not designed to overcome differences and assist in making compromises, but instead sets out to find ways to create a structural approach to literature that produces relevant results by looking in places where one would not look without being urged by a sturdy model.

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Part II

# THE DISCIPLINARY DIMENSION

# 16
# WORLD LITERATURE AND PHILOLOGY

*Michael Holquist*

Although he was a great cosmopolitan and visionary, even Goethe could not have foreseen the surge in global economic interconnectedness that, in the years since 1827 (when he coined the phrase "world literature"), has transformed the definition of "world"; nor could he have imagined the digital tsunami that is currently revolutionizing the meaning of "literature." World literature is an emerging phenomenon, so its study is predictably future oriented, with the titles of works framed as questions, such as David Damrosch's *What is World Literature?*

What *is* surprising, however, is that the ancient discipline of philology is *also* a topic that currently is hedged about with question marks, as in the Sanskritist Sheldon Pollock's 2009 essay "Future Philology?" There is so little agreement on the field's current identity that conferences are held to ask the question, "What is Philology?" (Ziolkowski 1990). Modern dictionaries provide a range of vague definitions, often beginning with the literal "love of words," then adding some mention of languages and old texts, while ominously concluding, as does the OED, "now rare." Students of literature find the relation of philology to their subject slightly embarrassing; even so sympathetic a literary scholar as John Guillory finds philology "protohumanistic" (Guillory 2002: 28).

Philology's identity is now indistinct because the discipline is widely perceived to have died at some point in the past. The presumed disappearance of philology is confirmed in a number of recent calls for its "return": Paul de Man's 1982 essay "The Return to Philology" (de Man 1993: 21–26) spawned a small sub-genre of essays bearing the same title (see Patterson 1994, Harpham 2005, and especially Said 2004), all of which add to the sense that philology is something that expired or was abandoned in the past, and which thus requires resuscitation in the present.

Since philology itself is now seen by many as moribund, the obvious question arises, why bother with it at all, much less call for its return? And why invoke so relentlessly antiquarian a discipline in a discussion of the still very new phenomenon of world literature? In order to understand philology's nevertheless continuing power to fascinate, it is useful to think of it as having two aspects: it was (and is) both a history and a practice. As a history, philology is remarkable for its great

age among the disciplines, arising as it did in the Fertile Crescent thousands of years ago. Philology's subsequent geographical scope has been enormous, with activity found in the Middle East, China, India, Islamic Africa, and Europe. In the past, these widespread centers of learning were unaware of each other. So it is all the more remarkable that the *practice* of philology, the characteristic procedures and tools that define it as a profession, are surprisingly similar wherever it is found in the ancient world. Moreover, they have remained relatively unchanged until recent times.

It is generally assumed that the first writing system is found in cuneiform tablets unearthed in southern Mesopotamia and dating roughly from 3200 BCE (see Cooper 1996: 37–72). Sumerian, the language represented in these tablets, died out as a spoken language early in the second millennium. The priests and scholars who kept the wisdom of the Sumerian past alive in the second millennium BCE, through annotations, bilingual texts, and translations, are the first philologists.

The subsequent history of philology has had its ups and downs around the globe. In the great learning centers of Nalanda and Taksashila, knowledge of the formal features of Sanskrit was employed in studying Hindu and, later, Buddhist texts, for both of which Sanskrit is the liturgical language. In the seventh and eighth centuries CE, the rapid spread of Islam meant that a uniform administrative language and script were urgently required, unleashing a storm of philological activity. What resulted was classical Arabic as we still know it; study continued in the great learning centers of Fez and of Al Azhar in Cairo, where the Islamic classics were pored over for centuries. Confucius' organization of ancient texts into the five classics in sixth-century BCE China was continually studied and debated by great scholars such as Su Shi (1037–1101); and in the early seventeenth century, when the Qing dynasty scholar Hao Ching (perhaps under Jesuit influence) "used philological methods to demonstrate once again that the old text *Documents* [most important of the Classics] was a forgery" (Elman 1983: 200).

Sheldon Pollock has proposed a definition of philology that can cover most of these appearances at different times and in different places around the globe: philology is "the discipline of making sense of texts. It is not the theory of language – that's linguistics – or the theory of meaning or the truth – that's philosophy – but the theory of textuality as well as the history of textualized meaning. If philosophy is thought critically reflecting upon itself, as Kant put it, then philology may be seen as the critical self-reflection of language" (Pollock 2009: 934).

In an effort to gain a clearer vision of what a future relation between philology and world literature might look like, it will, I hope, suffice for purposes of this short essay to limit the example of philology to what is widely conceded to be its Golden Age: from 8 April 1777 (when the first student matriculated for an academic degree in the subject) to 1872 (the year in which the young philologist Friedrich Nietzsche effectively renounced his profession in *The Birth of Tragedy*). This "golden age" built upon long-established prior philological trends in Europe, from the classical period through the eighteenth century – including notably the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, whose *Scienza Nuova* of 1725 had applied philological analysis to poetry, law, and the philosophy of history. Yet it was the German philologists of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who fashioned philology into a central academic discipline, inspiring and shaping, among other successor disciplines, the field of comparative literature.

## The rise of a new paradigm

To begin with "philology's birthday" – that fateful day in April 1777 when young Friedrich August Wolf insisted that he be identified in the Matriculation Book of Göttingen University as *studiosus philologiae* – it is not by chance that Wolf made his move when and where he did. His aim was to redefine philology during the German late Enlightenment – in other words, in the same cultural milieu in which Goethe would soon begin to speculate about world literature. Both activities evolve out of the particular shape that Enlightenment secularism assumes in the German lands during these years. Each is a version of the new sensibility Schiller called sentimental, but which is perhaps more recognizable at our remove as a profound sense of alienation that arises in the decline of religiously based authority. Nowhere was the pathos of this challenge felt more deeply than in Kant's Copernican Revolution, which engendered a new conception of the nature of thinking itself, and thus impelled a fresh interrogation of how thoughts relate not only to the world, but to words.

Though language had long been conceived as expressing thought so naturally that it did not exist as a phenomenon separate from thought, in the eighteenth century there arose a different way to think of the relation between thoughts, things, and words. A spate of works appeared, devoted to the subject of how languages arose in the first place (Adam Smith, Condillac, Rousseau, Herder). The language whose reality Enlightenment thinkers were helping to uncover was language conceived as an independent subject, something that, by 1865, F. Max Müller (1978) could already call "the *science* of language," what Noam Chomsky (1966) would nominate "Cartesian linguistics" and recognize Wolf's friend, Wilhelm von Humboldt, as its culmination.

The questions that Kant raised about our epistemological distance from things as they are in the world beyond our senses and reason – the world-in-itself – were seconded by von Humboldt's paradoxical vision of language as something in its own right – language-in-itself, independent of any particular speaking subject or national language. These new views effected a qualitative difference in how both philology and literature were perceived. By refusing to matriculate in the Theology faculty, Wolf not only chose to embrace the alterity of another people's culture from the distant past; he also made a decision about method, about the principles that would guide his textual study. Wolf opted for a secular, critical stance toward texts grounded in scholarship and rigorous method, as opposed to a mode of reading governed by faith and ecclesiastical authority – convictions held prior to examination of the text. He is at the end of a transitional period in the history of reading sacred texts in the West, marked by increasingly critical study of the Bible. In 1536, Tyndale could be garroted and burnt at the stake for his translated edition of the Bible. But two hundred years later, there arose a Higher Criticism that treated holy works as texts written in languages that could be studied by means of technical procedures derived from classical philology.

The fact that there was no *degree* in Philology did not mean that the *disciplines* of philology – deep study of ancient languages, establishing grammars and editions – were not practiced in Germany in 1777. The problem was not the study of ancient

Greek as such, but rather what you would do with the knowledge of the language thus gained. If you studied Greek, you did so in order to get a degree in the Theology Faculty, Greek being the medium of the New Testament. Wolf opted for a different mode of reading: he wished to use his knowledge of Greek to read the pagan classics. He was in love with ancient Greece, another people in another time, and he was not alone in his passion. The great majority of eighteenth-century German intellectuals felt a deep kinship with the Greeks. There were many reasons behind what E.M. Butler (1935) called "the tyranny of Greece over Germany," not least the checkered political reality of the small political units that comprised the soon-to-expire Holy Roman Empire. Ancient Greece was both a cause and a result of Philology's Golden Age.

So a first indication that philology might have a role to play in a new age of world literature is that, in its Golden Age, it found a way to connect to the most vital tendencies characterizing its own period with the traditional skills and methods of the ancient science whose name it bore. Wolf demonstrated a deep knowledge of ancient languages, a curiosity about the cultures that used those languages, a command of grammatical detail and vocabulary that allowed judgment of historical precedence based on linguistic usage. But in addition he brought to bear information gained from ancillary disciplines such as archeology and numismatics, deploying many of the techniques used by ancient philologists. What is revolutionary in eighteenth-century philology is the vast new importance these narrowly disciplinary skills acquired in an era when language, the topic at the heart of all philologies, was in the process of being recognized as the primary means by which human beings organized their profoundest thought.

A charismatic teacher, Wolf produced an army of students who spread out all over Germany to preach the gospel of *Alterthumswissenschaft*. In his 1807 textbook of the subject (*Darstellung der Alterthumswissenschaft*) he broadened the conception of philology to include virtually all aspects of life in ancient Greece and Rome. Wolf's student August Boeckh took this intellectually imperialist tendency to an insupportable extreme. More than any other single figure, Boeckh may be regarded as the man who made philology for a brief period the Queen of Sciences in Germany. During his long life (1785–1867) Boeckh published what became the bible of philology, his great *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften* (2nd ed., 1886, 1968). As opposed to Boeckh's *Sachphilologie* focused on objects, scholars such as Leipzig's Gottfried Hermann (1772–1848) proposed a *Wortphilologie*, a word-based philology, grounded in the deepest understanding one could achieve of the language one was studying. Hermann, a Formalist *avant la lettre*, attempted to achieve a more precise semantics and metrics by invoking Kant's abstruse logic. But for other philologists, most notably Wilhelm von Humboldt, Kant was significant as ground for a new sense of the category of personhood and the novel theory of human development – the famous doctrine of *Bildung* – that flowed from such a view.

In contrast to Kant's reliance on an abstracted, "pure" Reason as the fundamental basis of understanding, von Humboldt and his followers found in language a more concrete, traceable mode of understanding. Von Humboldt put forward language as not just representation of experience *to* the mind, but the activity that first of all

enables access *of* the mind to experience itself. By negotiating the simultaneity of sign and signified in language, something very like a parallel negotiation of mind and world could be accomplished within the mind. The secret to overcoming the gap between reason and experience lay in the strategies language made available for bridging the distance between a thing and its representation as a sign. Such negotiation was precisely the *work* that language does when it is conceived as an activity.

The new conception of thinking that results from Kant's revolution had immediate repercussions in education. If knowledge resulted from enlightened criticism exercising its judgment through language-enabled thought, how students were taught to think needed to be reformed so as to take these discoveries into account. Both Kant and von Humboldt thus became actively engaged in educational reform, von Humboldt through his activity as minister in charge of Prussian education, culminating in the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810. Key to the educational philosophy of both men was the concept of *Bildung*, an ideal that derived from Kant's famous 1784 essay "On Enlightenment," which he defines as "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity [*Unmündigkeit*]. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another" (Kant 1784).

Humboldt took from this injunction that education is essentially the act of gradually taking responsibility for one's own knowledge. The University of Berlin was founded precisely to enable such autonomy, conceived as a kind of semi-religious transformation of the Greek ideal of *paideia*. Berlin became the model for the majority of subsequent research universities around the globe. In each case the meaning of "research" was different, but for most it was a term confined to the natural sciences. But von Humboldt put classical philology, the study of ancient Greek civilization, at the center of Berlin's effort to encourage personal enlightenment. By the late nineteenth century, no German university, whether Catholic or Protestant, was without its powerful representative of *Alterthumswissenschaft*. No other nation could compete with the Germans in this area.

The importance of the university as an institution during these years is explained by the goal it attempted to achieve: creating a race of subjects who would be both free and responsible. Philology came to occupy a central place in education because it was perceived as the best means for realistically objectifying the vision of a vast unifying science. At a critical initiatory point in German university reform, then, philology becomes dominant because it was seen as the subject best able to dramatize and instill the new ideals, thus making it a model for what all other forms of education should be.

## The end of the golden age

The apogee of philology is marked in the opening of von Humboldt's University of Berlin in 1810. But soon the promise of philology began to implode, fragmenting into new disciplines that increasingly challenged its central role. There are many reasons for the collapse, some deriving from the internal history of the discipline, others from changes taking place in German society outside the academy. In retrospect, it was symbolic that a Prussian government – recovered from the shock of

French invasion and determined to re-impose a more conservative government – dismissed von Humboldt as Minister of Education in the very year his university opened. The academic study of Greek and Roman classics would continue to flourish in German universities, but philology's central role as a universal educational ideal would fade away. Its decline was dramatically made public in the defection of a young man considered to be one of its brightest future stars.

The publication of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* in 1872 aroused disputes among philologists that made public the discipline's loss of its former magic promise. The book's dithyrambic style was at odds with the stately prose that characterized the style of academic philologists up until that time. But what most aroused the anger of Nietzsche's fellow scholars was his thesis, a slap in the face of the discipline in which Nietzsche then held a chair. Instead of a paradise of noble simplicity and quiet grandeur, he posited a Greece where bacchantes and unreason had their home, using his philological tools both to deconstruct Greek rationalism and also to offer a challenge to contemporary Germany through a paean to the new music of Richard Wagner.

Nietzsche's highly unconventional book aroused the ire of another, even younger philologist, Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellenmdorff (1848–1931), who was already famous for his encyclopedic knowledge of classical culture. But Greek tragedy was a specialty of his, so he found Nietzsche's book particularly offensive. In the attack he published ("Philology of the Future!"), he gave a withering critique of Nietzsche's scholarship (Groth 1950). Having written so eccentric and factually unsound a book, he implied, Nietzsche should get out of the profession. The majority of scholars agreed; the following seven years were hellish for Nietzsche. Scorned by his peers and avoided by students at Basle, he finally gave up his Chair in 1879.

Already ten years earlier, when as a precocious twenty-four-year-old Nietzsche assumed the Chair of Classical Philology at Basle University, he had made clear in his inaugural lecture that philology was in trouble because of its all-encompassing ambition: "At the present day no clear and consistent opinion seems to be held regarding classical philology. … The cause of this lies in its many-sided character, in the lack of an abstract unity, and in the inorganic aggregation of heterogeneous scientific activities which are connected with one another only by the name 'philology'" (Nietzsche 1869: 1).

What Nietzsche is concerned about in these remarks is the extraordinary disciplinary mitosis that divides philology in these years. Boeckh's triumphant definition of philology as "das Erkentniss des Erkannten," "the knowledge of what is known" (Boeckh 1886: 10), made clear how bloated the claims being made for philology had become. His dream of a great all-encompassing empire of knowledge would lead to the break-up of classical philology. In his *Encyklopädie* he writes about "philological sciences" in the plural, and the great bulk of his book (over 600 pages) is devoted to separate chapters on ancient agriculture, coinage, architecture, economics, music, etc. Philology's claims to be an all-encompassing science broke down under the weight of its own ambition, resulting in a reduced and splintered discipline.

In the process of its decline, philological study of the Greek past had produced systematic effects on its own culture, stimulating the rise of new and rival disciplines.

The modern study of vernacular languages, a more scientific study of history, and the study of national literatures all now became academic subjects that began to eclipse their philological parent. *Romantiker* such as Friedrich von Schlegel took for granted the extraordinary importance that Fichte, Humboldt, and other leading thinkers of the period assigned to language. But they were also aware that language was taking on new meanings in light of developments outside classical philology. The most significant of these was the demonstration in 1786 by Sir William Jones of the historical kinship between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and the Germanic languages. The significance of this event can hardly be overstated, not only because of its foundational role in the rise of the modern science of linguistics, but also because of the expanded new sense of values that it opened up. Jones not only showed connections between Sanskrit and the European languages, but did so in terms that valorized the greater antiquity of Sanskrit: "The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either … " (quoted in Robins 1990: 149).

Here were new vistas in time – and in taste. Sanskrit – a language not only older, but more refined than Greek! In 1808 Friedrich Schlegel published *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* [On the Speech and Wisdom of the Indians], eloquently calling for a deeper study of Sanskrit in German universities. Chairs for Sanskrit studies were established; Bonn University opened its doors in 1818, and in the very next year Friedrich's brother August was appointed professor of Sanskrit. The history and comparison of Indo-European languages became an important new subject in its own right, making the nineteenth century the origin of modern linguistics. The new science was conscious that it was indeed a *new* science, and not just a continuation of philology: "Researches into the genealogies and affinities of words have exercised the ingenuity of numberless generations of acute and inquiring minds … Nothing, however, that deserved the name of a science was the result of these older investigations in the domain of language" (Whitney 1867: 2).

A second discipline that emerges out of philology's decline in the same years is a logical development of the first: specialized research on non-classical, vernacular language families, producing first German (as opposed to Classical) philology (Germanistik) in such masterpieces of scholarship as Jakob Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik* (1819–37). Romance philology, especially the study of French, now flourished. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, it was again the Germans who would play a leading role even in this area of scholarship, resulting in Meyer-Lübke's great four-volume grammar of the Romance languages (1890–1902) and his thirteen-volume etymological dictionary (1911–20).

The uncontrolled mitosis of German classical scholarship produced among its other effects the departments of national language and literature in modern universities. Perhaps predictably, national traditions were translated into departments of national literatures, first in nations on Europe's periphery, such as Russia and the United States, and then later in confident old centers such as Oxford (first Merton Chair in English, 1885). The international, non-nationalist study of ancient Greece broke up into the national and nationalist study of increasingly modern literatures.

Philology – envisioned by the founders of the University of Berlin in 1810 as unifier of all other knowledge – was fifty years later a fractured science splintered into several different disciplines. Although "Philology" is still to be found in European universities (where it is felt to be somewhat anachronous), it now figures in the United States as a professional modifier almost exclusively among classicists as a descriptor in journal titles and professional associations. Experts on ancient Indian, Arabic, or Asian languages and literatures are scattered across the academic map in departments of area studies, anthropology, linguistics, and a number of other units in which they are housed in decreasing numbers.

## Philology and world literature

The decline of the particular form of philology that fueled the ambitious dreams of the late German Enlightenment has conduced to the general sense that philology, as a subject, is dead. But that version of philology was always more a dream of German idealist and Romantic utopians than a fully actualized institution. Contemporary calls to "revive" philology, even when made by modern sophisticates such as Paul de Man, are naive in ways that are similar to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century attempts to identify the original language spoken by humans, variously identified as Hebrew, Swedish or – my favorite – Flemish (see Olender [1992] for details). We cannot go back beyond Babel; if philology is to play a role in the still unfolding drama of world literature, it will have to reinvent itself again.

As the greatest philologists have discovered again and again, there is no original text, even of such carefully maintained documents as the Bible, the Qur'an, the *Iliad*, the Confucian classics, or the ancient Vedic texts. It is significant that exposure of forgeries plays so large a role in the history of so many different schools of philology. But knowing that there are no original texts did not mean for the early Renaissance scholar Lorenzo Valla, or the Qing dynasty philologist Hao Ching, the same thing as postmodernist declarations of the death of the author. Philology is a version of academic agnosticism: beginning with the conviction that there is no text privileged *in itself*, the scholar then goes on to do the work of establishing, as honestly and as painstakingly as he can, what might be called a *good enough text*. As Wolf says of his work on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: "Once I gave up hope, then, that the original form of the Homeric Poems could ever be laid out save in our minds, and even there only in rough outlines, it seemed appropriate to investigate how far the ancient evidence would take us in polishing these eternal and unique remains of the Greek genius" (1985: 47).

Philology, then, displays a multiple history, composed of the various attempts to appropriate past meanings through minute study of texts based on expert knowledge of language. It is the history of how a set of technical practices (attention to changes in grammar, the appearance of neologisms, details such as dittographies, etc.) has been employed across the globe and in different ages to establish as close to a past textual meaning as humans reasonably can be expected to achieve. There are living aspects of philology so understood that might well be helpful to scholars in the emerging age of world literature. Traditional philology, devoted to the ancient works

that have always been its target – the establishment of definitive editions, work on historical changes in the technologies of literacy, etc. – will go on. The exploration of meaning from the past never ends.

And yet, in order to be part of world literature, the skills that define philology will have to be integrated into a vast new body of texts, different from those that have been its traditional subject of study in almost every way. I have been using the word "text" as if it were an unproblematic term, but of course it is not: not only are we entering a new age of world literature; we must as well attend the fresh challenges raised by digitization in all its ramifying variety. It is still not clear how philological skills, wedded as they are to writing in more stable formats such as tablets, scrolls, or codices will be brought to bear on such evanescent works as the cellphone novels so popular in Japan today.

It is not inconceivable that philology in the future will shift its attention from the material stuff of literacy, such as books and manuscripts, and digitally produced texts, to the physical act of reading itself. It would do so not as a rehearsal of reader response criticism, but as a turn to the intricacies of the brain's activity as it translates visual signals from the page into aural signals in the brain, thus realizing the text as *language* (see e.g. Dehaene [2009] and Wolf [2007]). If philology were to morph into a science devoted to the neurophysiology of literacy, its relevance to world literature would immediately be enhanced, if only because the human brain is the most cosmopolitan of all sites of text production.

In whatever form texts will be studied, on the page and in the brain, a crucial difference will be the new temporal horizons of world literature texts, many of which are of recent creation. Philology will have to bring the skills it has honed over the centuries from the study of antiquarian works to bear on very recent works. This can be done only within the shared activity of a community, a group of scholars with common aims. It is sentimental to call for philology's "return"; under the revolutionary conditions of world literature it must once again reinvent itself, as it did in the eighteenth century. It can no longer be the enterprise of individual giants of learning, of legendary figures such as Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, intimidating in their pietist single-mindedness and self-abnegation. Philologists will have to continue to work in their own narrow area of expertise, but must as well find new ways to bring their knowledge to a table they share with other specialists expert in different kinds of reading. Without the technical skills that have defined it for millennia, philology does not exist. But new ways must be explored to use these techniques in conjunction with colleagues who read in other ways.

The kind of learning required to read philologically is necessarily narrow, because it must be so deep. Very few human beings possess the gifts required to be at home in the history and linguistics of more than one culture. Much as world literature is not a canon of particular texts, but rather a mode of reading, so is philology. But it is a way to read that is necessarily at the opposite end of the spectrum from the fuller extensions of world literature. I hasten to add that this polarity difference does not disqualify the two reading strategies from working to inter-illuminate each other. Just as there is a world literature, so is there a world philology whose integrity is ensured not by what it studies so much as by how it studies. Deep study of texts is possible in any language and is too often missing in studies of world literature today.

A future philology of world literature will enrich philological inquiry and literary studies alike.

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# 17
# WORLD LITERATURE AND NATIONAL LITERATURE(S)

*Jing Tsu*

There is as yet no consensus as to where world literature stands in relation to national literatures. Certainly, there was a world prior to nations, and literature had been written well before the rise of the nation-state and its subsequent dominance as an interpretive paradigm. The world will, hopefully, still be there after nations have perished, merged through agglomeration, or become obsolete as socio-political entities. That world literature predates and may well postdate the era of nationalism and national literatures constitutes part of its promised breadth. One tantalizing prospect is surely how it will succeed where national conceits failed. At the same time, nation-bound thinking is not alone in having to confront its own conceptual and historical limitations. Whether the present new scale of literary studies can reach its purported audiences, be they distant cultures, minor literary traditions, or parallel world histories, depends on what the "world" means. The sum of its parts, as a spatial setting, a global genre, a new connectivity, an open process of discovery, or the latest contender in canon making, world literature refracts a variety of desires for the agenda of future literary studies. In view of these different possibilities, the relationship between world literature and national literatures can neither be mutually exclusive nor easily reconciled. Just as a notion of world literature, observes Claudio Guillén, would be meaningless without nations (Guillén 1993: 38), so national literatures have always been inseparable from the creation of world peripheries.

That the two implicate each other in this way, importantly, does not lead to a voluntary social contract or the absence of mutual exploitation. To understand how different scales of literary studies operate in symbiosis as well as in antagonism, one could begin by examining how the conception of world literature has changed. A growing recognition is the need to clarify rather than to idealize any invocation of the world. The relatively recent criterion for such clarification, posited by de Riquer and Valverde as "*a toda creación literaria capaz de interesar a un lector de nuestra cultura y de nuestro tiempo, por encima de barreras nacionales o lingüísticas y de posiciones ideológicas*" (de Riquer and Valverde 1970–1979: 1: 3; all literary creation capable of being of interest to a reader of our culture and of our times beyond national and linguistic impediments and ideological positions), has produced unimpressive results. The

doom of any sweeping representation of borderless humanity may come as no surprise. A central condition for the conception of universal history in the eighteenth century, a project not so distinct from the Enlightenment reprise of the Republic of Letters (see Buescu in this volume), was the intensification of suppression elsewhere in the world (Buck-Morss 2009). Behind every project of universalism, in other words, lies a veiled history of offshore experiments and failed materializations. This historical example may serve as a useful caveat. The underside of the recent race toward ever larger scales of literary studies hints at another trend, to outsource from the rest of the world. From the transnational to the world (Moretti 2000a, Damrosch 2003, Casanova 2004), the hemispheric to the planetary (Etiemble 1966, Spivak 2005), the planned coverage anticipates an explosive, diverse ecology that perhaps only an early, by now obscure, proponent of world literature and evolutionism, Richard Green Moulton, could have endorsed without irony (Moulton 1911; see Lawall in this volume).

The justification for this shift toward greater inclusiveness, paradoxically, also seems to reject this very principle in practice. One lament is the increasing volume of literatures to be read. Though this fact is unlikely to be unique to the contemporary era, only recently has it stirred an anxiety so deep as to prompt critics to declare the exhaustion of the literary undertaking as it had been known. The idea of patiently poring over the thousands of obscure works that exist alongside every known masterpiece is largely banished as an outdated approach. Scoffed at as a fetish of the past, national literature has been pronounced dead upon arrival, presumably even for those for whom national sovereignty remains a distant goal.

With the shrinking of the global literary space, few critics can still plead ignorance of the existence of distant works. Yet the growing awareness of other literatures "out there" spells a new liability as well. Just as the routes of access begin to widen and multiply, something else comes to light. Even if one had open access to all the literatures of the world, no one, it turns out, has the time to read anymore. Franco Moretti's candid acknowledgment of the "other 99.5 percent" of the unread joins a chorus of others before him (Moretti 2000b: 207; see Thomsen in this volume). Without reducing the problem to a question of numerical disadvantage, however, other critics have been more concerned with the reified standard of linguistic access to reading itself. While the observance of a "Greenwich meridian" may be vital to the coordination of literary trafficking (Casanova 2004: 87–103), a just embodiment of that standard remains open to the future. The need for a paradigm shift, on this view, is not due to too much homework. Rather, that a deeply humanist discipline bases itself on a selected notion of humanity has been recognized as a crippling constraint.

In response to the asymmetry, René Etiemble suggested in 1963 that Chinese should serve as the international working language for comparative literary studies (Etiemble 1966: 27–30; see Sayeh in this volume). The statement was, admittedly, more rhetorically than pragmatically motivated. But it carried an instructive message. Only a language as different and distant as Chinese can offer a firm corrective to the overwhelmingly Indo-European base of a troubled discipline. The exoticized flavor of his proposal notwithstanding, Etiemble did draw attention to an important, basic question: in whose language should a supranational approach to literary studies

sample its specimens and receive its cues of worldliness? Before the implications could be fully drawn out, however, Etiemble's proposal caused noticeable discomfort. For one thing, it set the bar even higher for the average comparatist, whose required command of three or more languages and their respective literary traditions meant, in many instances, really one language with theory or two in practice.

Harry Levin was among the first to react warily to Etiemble's proposal. In his presidential address to the American Comparative Literature Association in 1968 he saw learning Chinese as the tip of the iceberg, with Korean and other similarly formidable languages to follow. Indeed, the linguistic picture of a truly world-scale literature has since grown even more complex. If Levin were speaking today, other Asian examples would include Manchu, Vietnamese, Thai, and Mongolian, not to mention the various topolects and their variants that are generally assumed under the rubric of "Chinese." There is no shortage of non-dominant languages whose regional and local imprints remain to be fully reckoned with on a national level and world scale. The contentious divide no longer resides in the false dichotomy of cultural opposites ("ideographic" vs. "alphabetic" languages) but proliferates in the subnational, local, diasporic, ethnic, and intranational intersections of non-standard dialects, foreign tongues, and bilingual crossings (Gao 2007, Ha Jin 2008).

From the perspective of language alone, therefore, world literature has yet to fill an important vacuum. Other than the occasionally voiced concerns about the dominance of global English, or "Globish," in postcolonial and postnational linguistic studies (Kachru 1992, Bolton 2002, Tam and Weiss 2004), few critics have tackled its yet-to-be-defined role in world literature. The preoccupation with translation and theories of translation in the past thirty years has all but precluded discussions about the material and institutional dimensions of the language in which one comes to read, write, and receive that first literary impression (Venuti 1998, Sommer 2004, Bermann and Wood 2005). It takes the more distant opinion of the late nineteenth-century American linguist William Dwight Whitney to remind us that literature, after all, has everything to do with the foundational, and unquestioned, attachment to linguistic nativity: "No one can claim to have ready access to the foundations of knowledge nowadays who has it only by the channel of his native speech … Our native language is too much of a matter of unreflective habit with us for us to be able to set it in the full light of an objective study. Something of the same difficulty is felt in relation also to our native literature" (Whitney 1872: 399). Others echoed similar concerns. Five years after Whitney, Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz, the founder of the first journal in comparative literature, made leveling the field of linguistic exchange a primary, albeit ideal, condition (see Damrosch in this volume). On this principle, "a Hungarian contribution to Camões scholarship would be written in Portuguese and a German contribution to Cervantes criticism would appear in Spanish" (Meltzl 1877). Had this trajectory been diligently followed, one would hardly need to make special occasions out of rescuing minorities to see a Malaysian analysis of Peranakan literature that is written in Baba Malay, or a Chinese study of Min opera conducted in Taiwanese. Meltzl's original vision of an even, reciprocal practice of multilingual comparative literature has all but dissipated from the current scene. Even while displacing both the geographical boundedness and the linguistic standard of national

literatures, for the time being world literature still relies on English as the main global vehicle for its institutionalization and dissemination.

Another similarly neglected thread in the current discussions brings into relief the presentist temptations of world literature. Anthologizers tend to choose their selections in relation to their own genre and sense of geopolitical space, dismissing previous attempts as incomplete or prejudiced. Most of the selections contained in earlier anthologies of world literature, for instance, are unlikely to be seen on the short lists of the current plans for anthologization. John Albert Macy's *The Story of the World's Literature* (1925), one of the most influential books on world literature in early twentieth-century Asia, which was translated into Chinese and Japanese no less than eight times, these days is labeled "a tasteless and ignorant hack book in the Van Loon tradition" (Jessop and Wheatley 1999: 265). John Drinkwater's *The Outline of Literature* (1923–24), another forgotten title in the context of western literary criticism, once served as the blueprint for the first critical anthology of world literature in China, compiled by Zheng Zhenduo between 1924 and 1927 (Zheng 1924–27), followed by the efforts of Zhao Jingshen (Zhao 1930, 1931, 1932), and again in an even more ambitious scope by Zheng in 1935–36 (Zheng 1935–36). The parallel phenomenon of writing world literary histories, a massive project of national legitimation that was undertaken in not only the United States but also Japan and China from the 1910s to the 1930s, underpins the shift in tastes and institutional standards. Shortcomings and ethnic prejudices aside, these books are part of the global genealogy of world literature, even if Macy's heavy biblical tone, or Drinkwater's sweeping treatment of "The Sacred Books of the East" (Drinkwater 1923–24: 139–62) makes the currently enlightened critic wish otherwise. The new revitalization of world literature undoubtedly has its own ambitions to fulfill. An important aspiration, however, is to go beyond merely collecting the authors and works that are already familiar in the disparate national canons that it now brings under one umbrella. It is the outliers that would most benefit from a new global forum. Seen in this way, an equally expansive historicization of the geopolitical origins of its gesture of hospitality would greatly strengthen the invitation to participate in world literature.

Indeed, world literature can be a serious enterprise and even a perilous venture. The revitalization project of world literature comes to the fore, not coincidentally, when an expressed desire for joint humanity appears all the more urgent because of its fading possibility. The notion of *Weltliteratur* had its close antecedent in the eighteenth century. The original purpose of the "Republic of letters," Abbé Prevost described in his *Journal étranger* in 1754, was "to bring together in a single confederation all the particular republics in which the Republic of Letters has hitherto been divided" (Van Tieghem 1930: v). By the time Goethe looked again to this promise in 1827 and made his famous proclamation for *Weltliteratur*, he was searching for the possibility of a greater cultural alliance in response to the wake of the Napoleonic Wars (see Pizer in this volume). Even though Goethe's vision is usually credited with an upbeat cosmopolitanism, his own understanding of the world literary community was surprisingly sober. His oft-quoted sentiment – "the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" – does not capture his darker insight that its members would not see eye to eye. The

conditions for consensus were, in fact, minimal: "if [nations] do not care to love one another, at least they will learn to tolerate one another," with the expected result that "they will find in each other something likeable and something repulsive, something to be imitated and something to be rejected … " (Schulz and Rhein 1973: 10).

Having to grit one's teeth through *Weltliteratur* in this way hardly conveys a sense of pleasure. Yet the tension between mutual need and repulsion appears to have always been the driving force. Up close, the internal dynamics of any self-styled Republic of Letters serve to maintain a system of checks and balances rather than to nurture particular intimacies among kindred spirits. Oliver Goldsmith, writing *The Citizen of the World* in the 1760s from the fictional perspective of a Chinese philosopher traveling in Europe, had no illusions about the pretentions of civility when coupled with rivalry:

> … Every member of this fancied republic is desirous of governing, and none willing to obey; each looks upon his fellow as a rival, not an assistant in the same pursuit. They calumniate, they injure, they despise, they ridicule each other: if one man writes a book that pleases, others shall write books to shew that he might have given still greater pleasure, or should not have pleased. If one happens to hit upon something new, there are numbers ready to assure the public that all this was no novelty to them or the learned; that Cardanus or Brunus, or some other authority too dull to be generally read, had anticipated the discovery. Thus, instead of uniting like the members of a commonwealth, they are divided into almost as many factions as there are men; and their jarring constitution, instead of being styled a republic of letters, should be entitled an anarchy of literature.
>
> (Goldsmith 1891, 1: 75–76)

Goldsmith understood that civility was at best a compromise among, not a transcendence of, self-interested minds. There are as many factions as there are worlds, and any attempt to bring them together under an artificial rubric reproduces their mutual hostility.

With the claim of world literature arrive new liabilities, as the idea of the world continues to outdo itself, folding prior moments of transnationalism and globalization into its reconfiguration. Already looking to the next transformation, Gayatri Spivak set out to "propose the planet in order to overwrite the globe" (2005: 72). This all-encompassing projection reminds one that the prescription propagates a new code of conduct, a form of literary governance that is based on the distinguishing mark of hospitality and sustainability rather than traditional forces of coercion (Tsu 2010). In the most desirable scenario, world literature proffers a supranational clearinghouse, where influences, interculturations, translations, intertextual dialogues, and chance relations between distant genres are given a place to meet on more friendly, or depoliticized, terms. If the place-based metaphor rings too nationalist a tone, at least world literature tries to avoid any old territorialist connotations by promoting new networks of fresh comparisons. If the idea of a well-intentioned matchmaker presumes too much moral capital and supra-agency, it bears

remembering that world literature suggests not a geospatial container or a singular historical actor, but an analytical descriptor of tendencies, correspondences, and texts in motion across time and space that continues to extend our understanding of the global literary geography.

Many seem to admit that even the most generous perspective of an Earth literature is not beyond dispute. New world visions do not generally mark the beginning of something but bear witness to the contradictory tendencies and tensions already underway, for which some particular vision of the world offers an attempted resolution. The "world" is thus summoned to transcend a presentist moment and, more specifically, to do a certain deed. To place one's hopes in world literature, or other similarly large-scale rubrics, as a way out of a periodic disciplinary crisis in comparative literary studies, for instance, provides a small demonstration of this utility. What, however, has world literature done for the rest of the world?

To make explicit the favorable and unfavorable conditions of membership in the world republic of letters, it is worthwhile to revisit the first moment of its offering in a specific transnational context. When Goethe discussed the idea of world literature in a conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann in January 1827, he acknowledged that such a global prestige should not be ceded to the Chinese novel, Serbian poetry, or any number of other traditions with a "foreign," or historical, interest but no real universal relevance. Anything less than Greek, in his view, was not a viable candidate to represent the "beauty of mankind" (Goethe 1901: 175). The particular Chinese novel he referred to was *Hao qiu zhuan* (*The Fortunate Union*), a seventeenth-century romance novel. Translated, in whole or in part, a total of twenty-six times in Europe, the novel, paradoxically, did not impress its foreign readers all that much. Even Goethe knew that it was not one of the best in its genre. Chinese writer and intellectual Zong Baihua, reflecting a century later in China on Goethe's fascination, was doubly perplexed that such a "second and even third-rate novel" could have piqued the German maestro's interest (Zong 1968: 189).

The novel's accidental entry into the global circuit explains how this came about. *Hao qiu zhuan* was first partially translated into English around 1719, when it came into the hands of James Wilkinson, a British merchant who worked for the East India Company. Wilkinson had spent time in Canton (present-day Guangdong) and the translation was the result of an assignment from his Chinese-language lessons with a Jesuit Portuguese priest. Wilkinson likely had access to a 1683 edition of the novel. He died in 1736, but his nephew lent his incomplete translation (a quarter of it still in Portuguese) to another interested party, Thomas Percy, who undertook a secondary translation of the translation. Percy made further, partial inroads into the Portuguese section. He performed the excellent service of carefully annotating the translation, providing extended footnotes on the Chinese customs and practices mentioned in the text, based on what he had gleaned from missionary accounts and European travel writings. The complete translation was published in 1761 under the long title of *Hao Kiou Choaan or The Pleasing History, a Translation from the Chinese Language, to Which Are Added, i. The Argument of History of a Chinese Play, ii. A Collection of Chinese Proverbs, and, iii. Fragments of Chinese Poetry*. It was then translated into French (1766), German (1766), and Dutch (1767) in quick succession.

Speculations as to why this particular novel was chosen are best settled with reference to Percy's preface. The abundance of marginal comments and corrections in the manuscript, he observed, confirmed that it was "the work of a learner." Many parts were "first written with a black-lead pencil, and afterwards more correctly overwritten with ink," clearly under the direction of a master or tutor well acquainted with the Chinese language. Percy concluded that "the following is a piece of considerable note among the Chinese, otherwise a stranger would not have been tempted to translate it. That book would naturally be put first into the hands of a foreigner, which is in highest repute among the natives." He was wrong. *Hao qiu zhuan*, though well known to Chinese readers, was neither very significant nor innovative. It was, however, relatively short and written in an easy style. A romantic plot with a splash of strong, but not difficult, moral message (Percy likens it to Samuel Richardson's novels) made it an ideal textbook for beginning Chinese. In any case, Percy emphasizes the lesser importance of its literary quality: "[The Editor] neither attempts to conceal nor extenuate its faults. He gives it not as a piece to be admired for the beauties of its composition, but as a curious specimen of Chinese literature, and leaves it to the critics to decide its merit" (Percy and Wilkinson 1761: xiv–xv).

Percy's point is revealing. The novel's supposedly high reputation in its native context merited its translation, even though it is still considered to be a lesser literary text. The Chinese novel, in other words, is more Chinese than it is a novel. Goethe's distinction between great literature and literature of historical interest expresses a similar bias. To take this as a reason to indict *Weltliteratur*, however, would miss a greater point about the interrelation between national and world literatures. If Goethe's distinction between literary value and ethnography exposes a double standard, this propensity is nonetheless inherent to any desire for the world from a national and culturally centrist perspective. To illustrate this important modality, I examine the first invocation of world literature from the other direction, in China, as a point of comparison.

When the notion of "world literature" (*shijie de wenxue*) was first discussed in China as early as 1898, it was inspired by a new platform for displaying global cultural prestige. Chen Jitong, a Chinese diplomatic official and writer who was widely recognized as a Mandarin insider in Paris and elsewhere in Europe, raised the subject with the notable late Qing (1895–1911) novelist Zeng Pu in Shanghai. In this conversation, Zeng recalls, Chen passionately advocated world literature as a new cultural leverage for those who could gain access to it:

> We live in a time where we must rigorously pursue scientific studies in order to compete for survival. Where literature is concerned, we also cannot afford to be arrogant in holding ourselves to be uniquely superior … we must now concentrate our efforts on, first, not limiting ourselves to one nation's literature and thereby remaining in blissful ignorance, but pushing for and participating in a literature of the world (*shijie de wenxue*). Since we want to participate in a world literature, our first step must be to do away with the barriers so as to preempt misunderstandings. To do this, we must advocate for translation on a grand scale. Not only should we bring others'

> masterworks into our language, but our own works of merit must also be translated en masse into theirs. To avoid misunderstanding, we have to fundamentally change the literary customs that have been passed down. We must not only demolish the existing prejudices but also transform our methods in pursuit of a common goal. …
>
> (Hu 2003: 807–9)

Chen's expressed sentiment is hardly objectionable. A pursuit of world literature ideally moves boldly beyond provincial national conceits by offering a forum for exploring new commonalities and dispelling mutual distrust. The pragmatism of getting to know someone else's literature or conveying one's own in whichever host language has the greatest circulation takes precedence over any proprietary attachment to the nativist ideal of a national language. Chen's main reference point, admittedly, was French. The world stage at the time, moreover, was not exactly conducive to egalitarianism in practice. The late nineteenth century was a theater of imperialism and an incipient nationalist consciousness spurred by the reluctant awareness of the former coming to an end. Chen's proposal of world literature, therefore, was limited to a presumed exchange between already dominant languages and their capacity to engage on equal terms. Chen was, moreover, motivated by a felt indignation, rather than humility, over the lack of proper recognition of Chinese literature by western readers. Europe, from the vantage point of those in its colonial shadows, had been at the center of the world's reconfiguration. An entry into its literary platform was key to forging a more even nexus of cultural exchange. Even though asymmetry was palpable in every other way between the West and China, Chen's initial desire for world literature was born of a nostalgic, if genuine, wish to regain the cultural grandeur befitting erstwhile empires.

This early reception of world literature in the spirit of imperial cosmopolitanism quickly changed. At the time of Chen's conversation with Zeng, China was on the eve of one of its many cataclysmic revolutions in the modern period. Its relation to the world faced radical restructuring. The nineteenth century had already witnessed a series of events that crippled the Middle Kingdom, from the Opium Wars to the subsequent foreign occupations and internal ethnic uprisings. Losing to Japan in the watershed event of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 was an added humiliation, foreboding a new regional order in East Asia with Japan on the rise, and Japan's strength was again demonstrated in its widely broadcast victory over Russia in 1905. The attempt by China, falling ever further behind, to gain an international footing suffered a severe setback when the Treaty of Versailles ceded Shandong, a former German colony, to Japan instead of returning it to Chinese sovereignty. The peace terms of World War I brought anger and disillusion, and served as a catalyst for the already widespread anti-imperialist sentiment that pushed the then young Republic onto a path of urgent national salvation. The May Fourth Movement of 1919, inaugurated by a student demonstration and soon to be the platform for modernization, anti-imperialism, national survival, and New Literature alike, marks a self-proclaimed rebirth in every domain.

Such a violent (re)birth of a nation was hardly exceptional at the time. As the Chinese intellectuals and writers looked anxiously about them, they found no dearth

of company, mainly among those who had been at the peripheries of colonial empires or struggling to cross the threshold to independence. This new-found empathy for distant parallels opened up a channel to the world. A globalizing narrative began to unfold, built on subaltern resistances and pending extinctions, rather than on joint humanist ventures and utopian communities. Belated reports on black slavery in America, news of the Philippines' struggle for independence, the British colonization of India, Native Americans' pending racial extinction, the Boer Wars, and Russian anarchism steadily trickled in through the relayed voices of Harriet Beecher Stowe (Lin 1901), Fukumoto Nichinan (1902), and Kemuyama Sentarō (1902; Eber 1980, Ng 1988, Gamsa 2008).

Support for a different kind of world platform took shape and it was no less compelling. A formally expressed literary concern with the experiences of perishing nations and ethnicities appeared in February 1909. It took the form of a collection of translated foreign fiction devoted to the struggles of oppressed races and nations. Put together by the father of modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun, and his brother, Zhou Zuoren, *A Collection of Fiction from Abroad* (*Yuwai xiaoshuo ji*) was intended to be merely the inaugurating anthology of a whole series devoted to introducing Chinese readers to recent foreign literatures. Within four months, the Zhou brothers finished and published the first two collections. Much to their disappointment, however, only forty-one copies were sold in Shanghai and Tokyo combined.

Commercial failure aside, this lone effort was to have massive reverberations throughout the rest of the twentieth century. It helped to shift the literary focus of cultural hegemony to the interstices of emergent, minor, oppressed, injured, and sub-global narratives. In this way, a new conceptual grammar for world literature gained ground, differentiating the national and world literary space along lines of conflict rather than focusing on a common literary humanity. If Goethe had imagined *Weltliteratur* to emerge from a world community with little in common, Lu Xun responded with a borderless literature of oppression without global triumph. In this way, at cross purposes but with just enough to disagree on, worlds are created within the world, and literatures rise from the possibility of literature.

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# 18
# WORLD LITERATURE AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

*Sandra Bermann*

World literature has long been associated with comparative literature. Both have strong transnational aspirations, studying literature outside of and beyond a single national tradition. Yet the place and importance of world literature within the discipline of comparative literature have changed significantly over time. At one point a primary motivation for comparative study, world literature later achieved only marginal status. Today it again represents a vital project within the field. Frequently, the fate of world literature has been tied to that of translation. In the pages that follow, I will look briefly at this complex history, as well as at some current directions that revise our sense of what world literature has been – and might be.

## Disciplinary histories

As Goethe conceived it, world literature or *Weltliteratur* asked us to look beyond national contexts and see literature as the "universal possession of mankind." His words, recorded by Eckermann in 1827, are "National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (Goethe 1984). His view was largely proleptic, a discussion of what he hoped would come *after* the nationalizing tendencies of his day. Along with references to *Weltliteratur*, translations and adaptations helped to prompt the world literature he envisaged. Translations of Chinese novels and, particularly, the *ghazals* of Hafiz inspired Goethe's own writing and served to acquaint European readers with other literary cultures, bringing these texts literally within the broader "possession of mankind."

Such a vision – and practice – of literature were for Goethe, as well as for Marx and Engels in "The Communist Manifesto," one way to promote the role of literature in the consolidation of a German national state (Goethe), as well as to mark the much-desired post-national state and its literary culture (Marx and Engels 1952).

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, in the context of Europe's warring and emerging nation-states and its rapid colonial expansion, world literature worked in tandem with the disciplinary field of comparative literature. Together, they thrived, offering new ways to consider literary and cultural issues at a moment of political transformation, ways that would transcend national literatures without muting the individual qualities these literatures presented.

At times, such literary study was used to advance nationalizing interests, as was the case in the studies of folklore and literature by Georg Gottfried Gervinus and Jacob Grimm that supported, above all, the developing German language and literary culture. But at others, comparative writings were unusually broad and transnational. Such was the case with the first comparative literature journal, *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, edited by the Transylvanian scholar Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz (1877). Publishing articles in a variety of languages (ten official ones) and engaging with topics such as literary histories, the role of translation, and the importance of multilingualism, the journal foreshadowed concerns of the twenty-first century. The book *Comparative Literature* (1886), by the Irishman Hutcheson Macauley Posnett likewise marked out a broadly transnational comparativism, now with an evolutionary approach (Damrosch et al. 2009: 41–60).

If world literature could inspire such wide-ranging nineteenth-century renditions of comparative literature, the vision often faded as comparative literature made a place for itself in the academy. By the early twentieth century in France, the influential critics Paul Van Tieghem, Fernand Baldensperger, Jean-Marie Carré and Marius-François Guyard began to draw comparative literature in more positivist directions, clarifying that only "rapports de fait" between two elements, in two different (European) national languages, should bear the name "comparative literature," while studies including more should be categorized as "general" or "world" literature (Bassnett 1993: 28–30; Damrosch et al. 2009: 158–60). And though many comparatists, including René Wellek and René Etiemble, argued strongly against such distinctions, not only because they were intellectually limiting and difficult to maintain, but also because they generally excluded non-European literatures, the so-called "French school" long remained dominant.

The German tradition of comparative study, often concerned with folk and oral cultures, at times fed into far greater threats than a restriction of intellectual domain, as the great comparatist Ernst Robert Curtius briefly but poignantly described the situation in his 1948 Preface to *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Damrosch et al. 2009: 120–24). Though Curtius had envisioned comparative literature as a healing transnational force after World War I, in the "catastrophe" of the Nazi rise to power, scholars such as Eric Auerbach and Leo Spitzer fled Germany for Turkey and the United States, where their scholarly work attempted to retrieve the European culture left behind. Though Curtius remained, he took a bold stand against the rise of fascism in his book *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr* (The German Intellect/Spirit in Danger, 1932) – and then for fifteen years worked on his monumental study of the Latin Middle Ages, finding in the Latin past a universal basis for European cultural reconciliation.

Developing at a safe distance from the warring European nation-states, comparative literature in the USA of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

generally offered a less politicized, more idealistic view of the field (Bassnett 1993: 32–37). From the first, the so-called "American school" tended toward interdisciplinary practices and less restrictive views. Henry Remak's definition of 1961 later summed up its distinctive trajectory as "the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression" (Stallknecht 1961: 3). And yet, this broader, less politicized sense of the discipline and its refusal of the systematic restrictions typical in France did not always lead to an embrace of world literature. This was perhaps due in part to the institutional development of strong European national language departments in the USA during the early and mid-century, along with comparative literature's frequent position as a bridge among them, sharing faculty and course offerings. In practice, the field of comparative literature, broad though it was in inspiration, concentrated now on the "major" European literatures, read in the "major" European languages.

Indeed, by mid-century, two disciplinary issues hindered a more global comparative literature. The first was linguistic: comparative literature required professors and students to read texts in the original languages, not in translation. An expectation deriving from the philological training of many early comparatists, it gained in importance during the mid-century rise of "close reading" and the New Criticism in the USA. Such language requirements posed major problems for a world literature curriculum necessarily dependent on translations, particularly for texts from beyond Europe. But at this point in the trajectory of comparative literature's self-understanding, reading in the original was essential. So world literature was, for a time, relegated to the margins.

Two reports sponsored by the American Comparative Literature Association make this particularly clear. According to the 1965 Report by Harry Levin, "We need not be too much concerned with the problem of foreign literature in translation, if we distinguish clearly between such courses and courses in Comparative Literature … A further distinction might conceivably be drawn between Humanities or World literature or Great Books at the undergraduate level and Comparative Literature as a graduate discipline" (Bernheimer 1995: 23). Thomas Greene's 1975 report also worries about the prospect of literature in translation: "At the undergraduate level, the most disturbing recent trend is the association of Comparative Literature with literature in translations. Many courses taught today under the rubric Comparative Literature are in fact not properly labeled" (Bernheimer 1995: 35).

A second obstacle was methodological: as long as texts were European, they could presumably be studied with theoretical tools drawn from the heritage of European philosophy, theory, and literary criticism. Though interests often ran to a broader range of texts, and some departments brought East Asian literatures together with the European, concern about theoretical difficulties limited this exploration. Greene puts it plainly:

> we are still lacking the concepts and tools that permit us truly to study literature at the global level. These concepts and tools will gradually materialize. While waiting and searching for them, we must be aware of never again confusing world literature with the literature of our inherited culture,

> however rich. Conversely, while working toward global perspectives, we will still need the virtues, precision and integrity our inherited culture has taught us. It goes without saying that we cannot begin to absorb the wealth of exotic literatures without firmly possessing our own.
>
> (Bernheimer 1995: 36)

Though there is a latent incoherence in this statement, it was persuasive at the time, and in part because translation was itself omitted from central theoretical concerns of the field.

Between the mid-1970s and the 1990s, comparative literature grew and changed dramatically, and in ways that offered new space – and eventually a renewed welcome – to world literature. Theory, largely but not only European, became a major interest, and soon a defining feature of comparative literature. First structuralism and then poststructuralism revolutionized it, transforming the ways individual texts were read and how they might be read comparatively. Cultural studies emerged as another strong (and sometimes conflictive) current, bringing with it a much keener sense of historical and political contexts. As the century progressed, postcolonial studies and translation studies in particular, but also gender and sexuality studies, new historicism, race and ethnicity studies, and trauma studies, all expanded the global range of texts read as well as the theoretical assumptions brought to them.

These developments broadened world literature's appeal as they intersected with other signs of a gradually changing focus. For instance, if individual figures in comparative literature had, over the years, continued to underscore the importance of thinking of comparative literature in world literary terms, they were finally being heard. Etiemble, mentioned above, consistently took a strong stand for non-European literatures in the reluctant French academy. His own work, from its beginnings to his later *Ouverture(s) sur un comparatisme planétaire*, extended the transnational inspiration of Goethe's *Weltliteratur*, with attention to literatures of Asia, the Americas, Africa and Oceania (Etiemble 1988). Earl Miner, working in the United States, brought not only an expertise in Japanese as well as European literature to the field, but also some of the "concepts" and "tools" for a comparative practice that Greene had hoped to find (Miner 1990). A more planetary comparative literature also found expression in new comparative literature associations throughout the world. In addition to those in Canada, Western Europe, and the USA, active societies in Africa, East Asia, India, Eastern Europe, and Latin America brought new perspectives to the field. Focusing in part on their own complex literary cultures, these organizations used their perspectives to see – and perhaps re-envision – assessments of other, sometimes dominant literatures. New work produced by scholars from many parts of the world entered into circulation, increasing an understanding of the planet's literary traditions. The International Comparative Literature Association (established in 1955) encouraged this while bringing together scholars from many regions of the world to publish transnational critical studies.

Though these several trends joined to radically transform the identity of comparative literature, making it far more supple and inclusive, only in the 1990s did the field "officially" embrace the global transnationalism that constitutes world literature today. At this juncture, Charles Bernheimer's 1993 ACLA committee report made a

disciplinary recommendation that reflected the dimensions of the change. It advocated reading more literatures from more parts of the world. In order to do so, it insisted on more language learning – not only of the "major" European languages, but of other languages as well. The report also registered a new openness to reading in translation: "While the necessity and unique benefits of a deep knowledge of foreign languages must continue to be stressed, the old hostilities toward translation should be mitigated." In contrast to the past, it further suggests that translation might even be one of comparative literature's long-awaited "tools" for studying the newly "global" sphere: "Translation can well be seen as a paradigm for larger problems of understanding and interpretation across different discursive traditions. Comparative literature, it could be said, aims to explain what is lost and what is gained in translations between the distinct value systems of different cultures, media, disciplines and institutions" (Bernheimer 1995: 44).

By the close of the century, world literature had become a vibrant species of comparative studies and began figuring importantly in the university curriculum in many parts of the world. Changes in the "real world" doubtless played a role in this, as the increasingly global reach of financial and military systems, as well as information technologies prompted a sometimes urgent rethinking of cultural issues. A new literary cosmopolitanism began to be debated in the context of war, religious and political confrontation. As comparative literature reached the end of its twentieth-century institutional history, it was already engaged in a reading of more of the world's texts. Indeed, Goethe's *Weltliteratur* could look forward to a new institutional life.

A number of major works highlighted ways to read literature globally rather than in the European context. Franco Moretti's capacious projects on the novel, his "Conjectures on World Literature," and his *Graphs, Maps, Trees* attempted to reach every sector of the globe, inviting new insights into general patterns of production and reception, if less attention to the close reading of texts typical of the literary humanities (Moretti 1998, 2000, 2005). Pascale Casanova's *Republique mondiale des lettres*, with its insights into literary production and dissemination between center and periphery, also highlighted world literature, though from a more sociological and distinctly Parisian perspective (Casanova 1999). Gayatri Spivak, in *Death of a Discipline*, sounded the death knell of an "old" comparative literature that found its focus in Europe, while asking her readers to attend to a more "planetary" study. This commitment – to broader and deeper language learning, and to a joining of Area Studies with comparative literature – underscored the need to read and to teach with the planet in mind, rather than Europe, the USA or the global market (Spivak 2003).

In David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?*, the particulars of translation and dissemination helped to realize an expansion and re-interpretation of Goethe's vision. And what *is* world literature? As Damrosch puts it, "I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language … In its most expansive sense, world literature could include any work that has reached beyond its home base; but … a work only has an effective life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture" (Damrosch 2003:

4). Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* explored the particular role translation has played and must continue to play in any global or planetary version of comparative world literature. Looking to the development of the field from World War II to the present, she argues the need for a new comparative literature that would grow from the centrifugal force of translation and its related issues (Apter 2006).

The twenty-first century's renewed interest in world literature is evident in these and many other texts as well as in new teaching and scholarly initiatives around the globe. As Saussy suggests in *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, comparative literature today might best be described through its tendency to favor encounter and relation – with other texts, cultures, and disciplines (Saussy 2006: 23–24). Through its ways of reading, world literature contributes importantly to comparative literature's renewed commitment to a more global scholarship and pedagogy. Though there are a number of other projects now important to the field – including interdisciplinary studies joining literature and the arts, the law, the sciences, and social sciences, and a critical engagement with theoretical and cultural questions of many stripes – world literature remains prominent among them.

This does not, of course, mean that world literature lacks serious critiques. Taken to task at times for its lack of close readings and its frequent recourse to thematic approaches, it has also been criticized for retaining a Eurocentric bias. However, if world literature can contribute to more widespread and deeper language learning, as it engages with ongoing theoretical and textual issues, it can respond to these criticisms as it plays a major role in transforming literary study for the twenty-first century. Within this vision, issues of translation and literary transmission, so central to both comparative and world literature, offer particularly helpful "tools," as Greene put it, for invigorating the field. They can encourage us to rethink questions of texts, "world," and literary histories (Bermann 2009). I offer some examples here, sketching a few recent directions in the energetic project of world literature.

## Texts

Close reading and careful textual study have long been within the purview of comparative literature. The apparent difficulty of bringing these methods to world literature, where texts are read in translation, has, as we have seen, caused hesitation about its teaching and research. World literature's frequent resort to thematic issues has only sharpened the criticism. Yet reading in translation need not be reason to relinquish close textual study; it can in fact expand its possibilities.

Translations urge us to read comparatively, for they immediately bring at least two texts into play, along with a set of theoretical questions. We know well that translation does not create a text equivalent to the original, but rather a new text related to the first through a series of carefully negotiated transformations. Translation allows a text to "live on," in another culture and time (Benjamin 2000: 75–85). But it also questions and disrupts it, turning it in the direction of new frames of reference, and

raising fresh and unanticipated questions in the cultures that read it. It is the reader's task to reflect upon the texts and the choices made. This task is made even more complex for the disciplinary sensitivities of the comparatist, when certain texts come into the translation at hand via an intermediary second language.

World literature is particularly well-situated to make such comparative textualism important to its project. Drawing either on a knowledge of the source text, or on fellow scholars' knowledge of the language(s) in question, we compare aspects of the texts, bringing new insight into the negotiations and transformations that occur in translation. Even in the absence of direct linguistic knowledge, we can compare two or more translations of a single text, examining their differences and the likely linguistic and cultural premises of each. Reading with such awareness allows us to see the text from two or more perspectives at once, bringing attention to qualities of language and interpretation that could not otherwise be perceived. This is not a new idea. Goethe expressed himself as preferring to read his *Faust* as it was translated into French rather than in the original German, since he found it there "fresh, new, and spirited" (Damrosch 2003:7). At best, close linguistic comparisons may well encourage a student or a reader to undertake study of the language. Even if not, they offer new insight into the text and its possible interpretations. They also raise questions of literary transmission.

## "World"

If world literature might be considered as "any literary text that circulates outside its context of origin" (Damrosch 2003: 4), how, in fact, *does* a text circulate? What factors affect its circulation, enabling or hindering it? An inquiry into any text's circulation inevitably evokes very worldly, material considerations. Issues of power – political, informational, financial, technological, religious – can all affect the act, even the possibility, of translation, as well as a text's eventual dissemination and reception. How have various texts been translated, by whom, and for what purposes? Why is it that some texts of major importance within their cultures have never been translated? How does translation affect original-language authors and the languages in which they write? Whole archives of world literature are oral rather than written, and so are seldom considered for transmission in print form. Might they in fact be communicated through new ethnotechnologies (Glissant 1989)? And once texts are translated, how do they fare in their new cultural settings?

Considering such questions brings socio-economic, political, and religious issues into focus. It also reveals the ongoing inequalities in publishing, translation, and transmission among so-called "major" and "minor" languages (Allen 2007). Although translation and world literature offer the potential to create less hierarchical conversations among different cultures (Ngugi 2007: 131), such a dialogue depends on clearly understanding the power relations that translation and transmission entail – and an ongoing awareness that translation and dissemination never occur on a level playing field.

Such awareness underscores not only the differences in linguistic accessibility and circulation that confront us throughout the globe, differences often particularly

salient in postcolonial contexts. It also highlights how inevitably partial is our view of the "world" – and how that view changes radically depending upon where we stand. If we are in China, Tanzania, Peru, Syria, or India, our perspective on and access to world literature will differ dramatically from that in England or North America. It will not necessarily be lesser; it might well be greater in choice and availability of texts (since many nations translate much more than the USA or Britain). But it will surely be different. Thinking through these issues of translation and transmission – on the web or in book publishing – reminds readers that they stand somewhere particular in the language world. And what we call the "world" depends on our place within it. One of the tasks for the future will be to explore more fully what "world" literature – as well as "translation" and "transmission" – mean from different geo-linguistic standpoints, since these central terms vary markedly according to linguistic and cultural context (Tymoczko 2006:13–32).

But translation and transmission can help us think through more than our geographical and linguistic sites. They also support new ways of conceptualizing literary history, encouraging literary histories "from below" – that build in part on the material dissemination of texts.

## Literary histories

Transmission and translation have been features of literary history from earliest times. An example such as the *Thousand and One Nights* is a case in point, with its translations across languages and cultures, translations that often include textual additions and transformations (see Naddaff in this volume). A very different, twenty-first-century example of transnationalism is the work of Amitav Ghosh, whose writing is regularly translated into several languages upon publication. But we can also focus on foundational texts – texts reputed to found a specific cultural and literary tradition and to stand as "classics" and as "masterpieces" in the linear build of our national or regional heritage. Dante's *Inferno* is particularly interesting in this regard, because it is an acclaimed masterpiece, a window onto medieval Florentine culture, and a "foundational" text of Italian and, indeed, European culture. Its importance within European culture attracted the attention of two of the twentieth century's most celebrated comparatists – Ernst Robert Curtius and Erich Auerbach. Each read the *Inferno* with deep erudition and interpretive insight, seeing it within a long line of texts creating the European tradition.

Comparing Dante's text with earlier, classical works, Curtius saw in it an example of the ongoing presence of the Latin past, and the continuity of European culture more generally (Curtius 1953). Erich Auerbach, who dedicated a major volume to Dante (Auerbach 1961), and later a pivotal chapter in his *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Auerbach 2004), presented the *Inferno* in a somewhat different light. Through a careful textual reading tying rhetorical effects to the broader cultural context, Auerbach entered Dante's world and revealed his transformative position within Western history. Through his new multilingual Florentine vernacular and his mixing of rhetorical styles, Dante draws the classical heritage together with the Christian figural tradition in strikingly human, earthly images. Indeed,

for Auerbach, the classical and Christian join in Dante to inaugurate the modern literary representation of reality.

Though Dante's text yields major insights from such defining comparative analyses, the *Inferno*'s textual history also reveals a past of translation and circulation well worth exploring, and insight into a history less linear and less confined to a central European tradition. One could begin by considering, comparatively, Dante's own translations, looking to what he himself read in Latin and French, as he constructed the plurilinguistic vernacular that we today call Italian. But one could also work in a different comparative direction, looking to all the translations and adaptations of Dante's text that have journeyed over time and place for centuries. Following such trade routes, we find translations and adaptations into Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese, Dutch, Finnish, French, Gaelic, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Latin, Lettish, Polish, Portuguese, Provencal, Romanian, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, a number of Italian dialects, and Esperanto. And what about the ekphrastic, or intersemiotic translations so vividly expressed in Botticelli, Doré, Blake, Salvador Dalí, Rodin – or the 2010 video game, *Dante's Inferno*? For the teacher and scholar of comparative literature, following these translations and their cultural metamorphoses into new languages and media reveals the encounters of Dante's text with other languages and cultures, suggesting how he might be read as a "global" author, especially by readers proficient in methods of comparative literature.

But it can be equally instructive to look to translations and adaptations that have become part of what we think of as a local or national culture. In an Anglophone context, we might find, for instance, examples in Chaucer, Milton, Shelley, Keats, Barrett Browning, Longfellow, Tennyson, Eliot, Auden, Lowell, Clampitt, Creeley, Walcott, Hill, Heaney, Pinsky. Such a path within a single language and its various cultural contexts underscores the transformative dialogues that translation can produce. If translations and adaptations of Dante's text have, for instance, long offered Anglophone readers a way to see another tradition and culture – by bringing it into dialogue with its own texts and diverse traditions, Dante's *Inferno*, so transformed, has also changed what one thinks of as the "home," or inherited, Anglophone culture. Dante's text is, indeed, no longer just a "foreign" text. It is fully woven into the "home" culture – so much so that to speak of national borders misses the mark. Dante's multilingual vernacular contributes to the very texture of the Anglophone literary world. The word "inferno" is now an English word, used to describe the most devastating catastrophes of the modern world.

It would be equally interesting in the contexts of comparative literary study to consider the translation and transmission history of other foundational texts, such as the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the Bible, the *Aeneid*, or the Icelandic sagas. Homer's *Odyssey* has, for instance, also received the careful attention of Erich Auerbach, who compares its clean, paratactic style to the more hidden and complex narrative structures of the biblical book of Genesis. One can imagine a twenty-first-century world literary comparison of the *Iliad* with the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*. How might we compare the Indian text's sprawling battle scenes and sacred sermons with the tighter narrative and linguistic structure of Homer or, for that matter, with the more mysterious, silent spaces of biblical narrative? But also, we might ask: how were these three

works constructed and transmitted? Out of what oral and written materials? By whom, when, and under what material and cultural conditions?

Looking centuries ahead, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are now being compared with a modern epic they directly inspired, Derek Walcott's *Omeros*. Here we can in fact observe a twentieth-century text that has translated and transformed both Homer and Dante (among other epic works) in the light of its own very different Caribbean history, language, and literary purpose. A comparative reading provides the necessary framework for a text that defines itself through confrontation and dialogue with its precursors.

Nor would it be difficult to bring poetic forms into such transnational comparative histories. The sonnet, whose origins are associated with the Sicilian court of the Arabic-speaking Federico II, and whose transmission history helped to create the European vernaculars, has by now reached and transformed a number of poetic traditions through centuries of translation not only in Europe, but in the Americas and Asia. The *ghazal* form, with its Persian beginnings, has migrated across various parts of Asia and the Middle East, including Turkey and India, before being translated and imitated in Europe even before Goethe, and in the Americas up to the writings of Adrienne Rich and the Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali. Thanks to figures such as Ezra Pound, the haiku, emanating from *renga* forms in Japan, affected modernist poetry in the USA and France more than many texts and poets in the indigenous traditions. Through such translations and migrations across continents, various conceptions of "love poetry" have evolved.

For practitioners of comparative literature, tracing the itinerary of such textual transmissions reveals the dynamism of the world's intertwined literary histories. The adventurous encounters of languages, cultures, and texts that arise in the course of their translation and transmission leave an imprint directly, often indelibly, on what we call a national culture – even "our own." They make us who we are and other than who we are. As these non-linear, non-nationalist histories of transmission suggest, they have, in fact, long made us transnational and, to some extent, at least, part of a world literary context. They have done so since the very beginnings of literary production (Damrosch 2003). It is even quite possible that, as Édouard Glissant suggests, what we call "foundational" texts often reveal an expansive worldly, geolinguistic, and historical extension or "errantry" only later appropriated by national and regional histories (Glissant 1997: 14–18).

In any case, following such winding trade routes of literary transmission yields evidence of a cultural interrelatedness that is important to acknowledge – and to juxtapose with national, regional and local traditions operating within it. Indeed, Greene's early insistence that comparative literature remain within the confines of an "inherited culture" looks particularly incomplete in the disciplinary context of comparative literature as it has recently evolved. Our inherited cultures are, in fact, the cultures of Dante, of Hafiz, of Basho, and of *Gilgamesh*. This awareness also revises Goethe's forward-looking notions of *Weltliteratur*, reminding us that world literature is as intrinsic to our past as it is important to our present and future. Indeed, for its many new ways of reading and analyzing texts and contexts, only a few of which I mention here, world literature is now once again not only an essential, but a highly innovative aspect of comparative literature's disciplinary history.

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# 19
# WORLD LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION STUDIES

*Lawrence Venuti*

## Defining world literature through translation

World literature cannot be conceptualized apart from translation. In most historical periods as well as in most geographical areas, only a small minority of readers can comprehend more than one or two languages, so that considered from the reader's point of view, world literature consists not so much of original compositions as of translations – that is to say, foreign-language texts translated into the language of the particular community to which the reader belongs, usually the standard dialect, or a dominant language in multilingual situations. Translation thus enables the international reception of literary texts.

At the same time, translation is fundamentally a localizing practice. Every step in the translation process, starting with the selection of a source text, including the development of a discursive strategy to translate it, and continuing with its circulation in a different language and culture, is mediated by values, beliefs, and representations in the receiving situation. Far from reproducing the source text, a translation rather transforms it by inscribing an interpretation that reflects what is intelligible and interesting to receptors. The transformation occurs even when the translator tries to maintain a fairly strict formal and semantic correspondence. The complex of meanings, values, and functions that the source text comes to support in its originary culture insures that any translation will at once fall short of and exceed whatever correspondence a translator hopes to establish by supporting different meanings, values, and functions for its receptors. This ratio of loss and gain allows a translation to be constructed as an object of study that is relatively autonomous from the source text but always tied indissolubly to the receiving situation.

As a result, translation deepens current definitions of world literature. If world literature is "characterized by the opposition between the great national spaces, which are also the oldest – and, accordingly, the best endowed – and those literary spaces that have more recently appeared and that are poor by comparison" (Casanova 2004: 83), then the intercultural relations in which translation figures are, in any historical moment, not just asymmetrical but hierarchical. Major literatures achieve dominance or centrality because their extensive traditions have accrued cultural

prestige, whereas minor literatures occupy a dominated or peripheral position because their development has been limited in comparison. A minority status often drives a literature to increase its resources by translating texts from its major counterparts, importing forms and practices that its writers had not previously used and transferring the prestige that accompanies texts in major traditions. By the same token, a majority status leads a literature to translate less because its broad range of forms and practices can sustain independent development. When a major literature does translate, it invests source texts with its cultural prestige, performing an act of "consecration," especially when those texts originate in a literary minority (Casanova 2004: 135).

Still, translation patterns may not be as straightforward as terms like "importing" and "transferring" might suggest. Intermediary forms and practices can decisively intervene between a source text and a translation. Early twentieth-century Catalan writers such as Josep Carner not only sought to modernize Catalan literature by translating British novels of the Victorian and Edwardian periods, but they looked to France for guidance as to which novels to translate, adopting French critical categories and even French translation strategies (Coll-Vinent 1998). Alfred Gallard's 1930 Catalan version of Joseph Conrad's novel *Typhoon* (1903) imitates the lexical and syntactical features of André Gide's 1923 French version (Coll-Vinent 1998: 219–23). Where translation is concerned, major literatures might manifest similar dependencies. Publishers in the United States rejected proposals to translate the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges's innovative fiction – until French translations had appeared during the 1950s from a distinguished press, Gallimard, and Borges had been awarded the Formentor Prize by an international group of publishers based in Western metropolitan centers (Levine 2005: 310).

Because translation always answers to contingencies in the receiving situation, the intercultural hierarchies in which it is implicated turn out to be more complex than the simple binary opposition between major and minor literatures. Lu Xun, the early twentieth-century Chinese writer, also looked to France for source texts that could be useful in modernizing Chinese culture, but in 1903 he chose to translate Jules Verne's science fiction novel *De la terre à la lune* (1865; *From Earth to the Moon*) because it contained popularizations of science in an entertaining form that could appeal to a wide readership (Semanov 1967: 14). In by-passing canonical Western novels for an author and a genre that were marginal in the contemporary canon of French literature, Lu Xun exposed a hierarchy *within* French literary culture (Evans 2000). Minor literatures might thus interrogate their major counterparts by translating so as to raise issues such as canon formation. They might also translate among themselves so as to explore the possibilities for cultural change offered by their shared minority status. In 1909 Lu Xun and his brother Zhou Zouren collaborated on an anthology of translated fiction, and since they sought to use literary translation as a means of altering China's subordinate position in global political relations, they drew on minor literatures that had achieved international recognition (Eber 1980: 10; Lee 1987: 22–23). Their anthology presented the work of such authors as the Russian symbolist Leonid Andreyev and the Polish historical novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz.

Translation likewise complicates the effort to conceive of world literature as a special kind of textuality that combines foreign and local materials. This definition,

developed to explain the transmission of a Western genre like the novel to other, usually minor literatures in the Eastern and Southern hemispheres, has been refined to encompass "a triangle: foreign form, local material – *and local form*. Simplifying somewhat: foreign *plot*, local *characters* and then local *narrative voice*," where the local narrator's commentary can become "unstable" in negotiating foreign formal features (Moretti 2000: 158; italics in original). This account aims to describe original compositions whose constitutive materials are assumed to be readily identifiable as foreign or local in origin – an assumption that may not in fact be upheld by analysis because literary texts tend to be heterogeneous cultural artifacts. Translation increases the heterogeneity because the translator's verbal choices amount to interpretive moves that vary the source text. The variations may be determined not simply by the receiving language and culture but by a reading of the source text that incorporates knowledge of the source culture as well. The localizing drive of translation can therefore change the very nature of the categories "foreign" and "local" as they are understood by readerships in the receiving situation.

## Translation and the world literary text

Consider the British writer Ian McEwan's novel *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), an illuminating case for considering the notion of world literary textuality because within roughly a decade of publication it was translated into some fifteen languages, major European (French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish) but also Near and Far Eastern (Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, Turkish) and minor European (Catalan, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, Polish, Romanian). Because this text consists of literary and cultural forms that are recognizably British, it might be considered local to a large extent. It exemplifies the classic realism that dominated the development of the British novel from the eighteenth century onward, creating an illusion of reality not just by accumulating verisimilar detail but by establishing for the Anglophone reader a position from which the narrative becomes intelligible and thus plausible, a position of identification that can move between an authorial voice and points of view linked to specific characters (see Belsey 1980: 64–77). McEwan's characters are also local. The narrative follows a British couple, Colin and Mary, who describe themselves as "on holiday" in Venice, where they meet another couple, an Italian named Robert and his Canadian wife, Caroline (McEwan 1981: 12). The foreign setting and the presence of foreign characters actually indicate that the origins of the text are local, even though including localized foreign elements. British travelers in Italy became a veritable convention of British prose fiction between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries, from Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) to E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908) and beyond.

The jolting climax of McEwan's novel, in which Robert and Caroline are revealed to be sadomasochistic murderers who kill Colin for their pleasure, similarly derives from British literary traditions that often intersect in specific texts: the thriller genre and the stereotype of Italians as immoral, inclined to deceit, lasciviousness, and violence. The Italophobia dates back at least to the Elizabethan period, present in a treatise like Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), where the Englishman under

Italian influence is called a devil incarnate. Yet the same sort of ethnic stereotype subsequently recurs in suspenseful plots that anticipate McEwan's, stretching from Ann Radcliffe's Gothic romance, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which features several Italian villains, to Daphne du Maurier's mystery of clairvoyance, *Don't Look Now* (1971), in which a serial murderer terrorizes Venice. Behind McEwan's treatment of the city as a stage where tragic desire is enacted lie not only these British traditions and conventions, but the German writer Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912; *Death in Venice*), so that the British novelist can be seen as revising and updating a foreign plot as well, recasting it in British terms (Von der Lippe 1999).

Some of the identifiably British materials can be noticed in Colin and Mary's first encounter with Robert near the very beginning of the novel. The couple get lost while searching for a restaurant late at night, and as Mary tries to find their bearings, they suddenly come upon Robert:

> She pointed at a doorway several yards ahead and, as if summoned, a squat figure stepped out of the dark into a pool of street light and stood blocking their path.
>
> "Now look what you've done," Colin joked, and Mary laughed.
>
> The man laughed too and extended his hand. "Are you tourists?" he asked in self-consciously precise English and, beaming, answered himself. "Yes, of course you are."
>
> (McEwan 1981: 25)

The passage exhibits the earmarks of classic realism. Through the pronoun "she," the reader is positioned in Mary's point of view, which is initially spatial: she indicates a spot where she and Colin had passed a few days before, the reader looks in that direction with her, and the fictive world is made plausible. Insofar as she is uncertain about how the man came to be there – he seems to be magically "summoned" by her gesture, as if he were a spirit in a Gothic romance – the spatial point of view becomes cognitive and then psychological: the reader is positioned to share her laughter at Colin's joke that her pointing inadvertently did something wrong. The joke and the laughter show Colin and Mary's lack of fear and suggest their familiarity with the space: the man blocks their path, but not deliberately, only because they are standing in a narrow Venetian street which is the width of an alley. Robert's question might be considered intimidating because it quite baldly exposes their vulnerability as tourists: they are in fact lost. Yet any possibility of intimidation is pre-empted by the man's participation in Mary's laughter, by his effort to greet them, and by the signs of his own vulnerability: he gestures to shake hands, seems insecure about speaking their language (his English is "self-consciously precise"), and takes boyish pride (he is "beaming") both in his correct pronunciation and in his certainty that they are tourists. Hence his answer to his own question effectively removes any hint of intimidation, as well as any physical danger, by implying his sympathetic awareness of their situation. No appreciable distinction appears between the characters and the authorial voice that has represented the encounter from Mary's point of view. In terms of British literary traditions, the exchange adheres to

a familiar convention, the meeting between British travelers and a native Italian in an Italian locale where every character speaks English.

The Italian translation of McEwan's novel maintains the realism of the narrative, but since Italian literature has a strong realist tradition that extends from the nineteenth century to the present, the Italian reader is unlikely to regard the form as foreign rather than local (see Carsaniga 1974). The English passage where Colin and Mary meet Robert, moreover, undergoes a significant transformation in Italian, starting with the substitution of an Italian measurement ("qualche metro"/several meters) for an English one (McEwan's "yards"):

> Indicò una porta qualche metro piú avanti e, come evocata, una figura tozza emerse dal buio entrando nel raggio di un lampione e si fermò in modo da bloccare la strada.
>
> – Guarda cosa hai fatto, – scherzò Colin, e Mary rise.
>
> Rise anche l'uomo, porgendo la mano. – Siete turisti? – chiese in un inglese deliberatamente preciso e, sorridendo, rispose per loro. – Certo, naturalmente.
>
> (Bertola 1983: 21)

Here too Mary establishes the point of view, yet the characterization of Robert displays several striking shifts. He is portrayed as *intentionally* blocking Colin and Mary: "si fermò in modo da bloccare la strada" (he stopped in order to block the path). Although the passage indicates that he speaks in English, the Italian grammar introduces a perceptible change in his tone: he is meeting the British couple for the first time, but he boldly uses the familiar second-person form of the verb "to be" ("siete"/you are) instead of showing respect with the polite third-person form, so that calling them tourists seems confrontational, an insistence on their vulnerability. His English is described as "deliberatamente preciso" (deliberately precise), as if he wished to make clear that he knows just how vulnerable they are. The boyishness of "beaming" in the English text here becomes the more ambiguous "sorridendo" (smiling), and he responds to his question "per loro" (for them), tacitly taking control of the situation. His response, "Certo, naturalmente," suggests that their vulnerability as tourists is inevitable: in a close back translation, "Of course, naturally."

Through such shifts, the Italian version suffuses the entire scene with an ominous atmosphere that is absent from the English text. Robert is depicted as aggressive, even menacing. This change in his characterization weakens Mary's reliability as the position from which the scene becomes intelligible to the Italophone reader: although at first her point of view makes spatial sense of the action, her laughter at Colin's joke implies that, like him, she is unaware of Robert's potential danger, and so another, more reliable point of view is created, that of the implied author, with whom the reader shares the ironic knowledge that Robert's threatening appearance is no joking matter. Suspense is generated, consequently, an uncertainty about what will happen to Colin and Mary.

The translation thus inscribes an interpretation that is rather different from the meaning that can be perceived in the English passage. The verbal choices evidently rewrite Robert's entrance in light of the murder he will commit much later, altering

the subtle positioning by which the reader shares Colin and Mary's initially unsuspecting attitude toward him. The difference in point of view and characterization is also a difference in genre. The English text presents a conventional realistic narrative virtually until the violent climax, whereas in this early scene the Italian version suddenly transforms it into a thriller with decidedly Gothic overtones. The Italian word that describes Robert's abrupt appearance, "evocata," although it accurately renders "summoned," differs from the English word in being primarily occult in significance, as in "to conjure up" a spirit or demon.

Nonetheless, any precise identification of foreign and local elements in the Italian version remains difficult, if not impossible. A translation recontextualizes the source text by creating a receiving intertext that replaces relations to the source literature with relations to literary traditions in the receiving culture, so that a reader of the translation must possess the literary and cultural knowledge to perceive the intertext as well as the critical competence to formulate its significance for both the source and the translated texts (see Venuti 2009). An Italophone reader familiar with British literature could certainly read the ironic point of view and the negative portrayal of Robert as establishing a correspondence to the English text, where these features derive from the Italophobic stereotypes of Italian characters in British genres such as the Gothic romance and the thriller. Yet the same features could be read as the inscription of foreign form and characterization, an Italian interpretation of the English text, since the genres also exist in Italian literary traditions (see Billiani and Sulis 2007; Carloni 1994). This indeterminacy in potential Italian responses might be attributed to the uncertain status of Italian literature today when seen in a global framework, not quite minor, endowed with rich literary traditions, but not quite major, lacking the cultural prestige possessed by English or French.

The interpretation inscribed by the Italian version, furthermore, cannot be regarded as distinctively Italian: it also appears in translations of the novel into other languages, major and minor. In the Spanish version, the man, whose mysteriousness is made explicit with the term "el desconocido" (the stranger), "permaneció en pie sin moverse, cortándoles el paso" (remained standing without moving, cutting off their path) (Gómez Ibáñez 1982: 26). In the French version, the man suddenly "jaillait" (sprang out), "alla se planter au milieu d'une flaque de lumière et leur barra le passage" (went and planted himself in the center of a pool of light and blocked their path) (Carasso 1983: 34). In the Catalan version, the man "va col·locar-se sota un raig de llum, barrant-los el pas" (positioned himself under a ray of light, barring their way) (Trias 1997: 33). These translations, like the Italian version, transform the scene into a threatening encounter so as to foreshadow the climactic murder. Perhaps they should all be read as interpretations that question the source text, challenging the apparently innocent presentation of Robert in the English passage, calling the author's bluff, in a sense, by suggesting what is to come later, a confirmation of British traditions, conventions, and stereotypes. In this respect, the interpretations inscribed by the translations might well signal a resistance toward the majority of the English literary text, which in turn uncovers an aggressiveness, even an antipathy engendered by their minority status.

Clearly, the formal and semantic gain that enables translation to define world literature cannot be perceived without close reading, without a detailed analysis that

examines shifts between the source and translated texts. "Distant" reading, where emphasis is placed on either "smaller" textual features like "devices, themes, tropes" or "larger" structures like "genres," traditions, and cultural "systems," is essential to understanding world literature as an intricate, historically developing ensemble of cross-cultural relations among major and minor traditions (Moretti 2000: 151). Yet allowing the text to disappear as a unit of analysis between these two extremes would be counterproductive: the text not only links the small feature and the large structure, showing how they depend on one another for their literary and cultural significance, but it also makes visible the role of translation in the construction of world literature. The idea that close reading "necessarily depends on an extremely small canon" (Moretti 2000: 151) is false; the problem is rather that close reading continues to be performed on a limited canon of original compositions, betraying, I would argue, an unexamined investment in a romantic concept of authorial originality that marginalizes a second-order practice like translation. Corpora of translations can be analyzed at a distance, so as to consider how patterns of exchange influence receiving literary traditions. But individual translations can also be submitted to close reading, so as to consider how specific interpretations of the source texts shape that influence. This methodological point may become more persuasive when we recognize that not every text can be classified as world literature simply because not every text reveals the impact of a foreign tradition and, perhaps most importantly, not every text is translated.

## Canons of foreign literatures in translation

We can exemplify an approach to world literature that combines distant and close reading of translations by developing first a systemic view. As the theorist Gideon Toury has argued, a translation never gives back the source text itself, only a mediated form of it, a representation, and the mediation registers norms or values in the receiving culture (Toury 1995). More precisely, the source text and its translational representation are situated in a "norm-system" or hierarchy of value in their respective cultures, where the position occupied by each might be central or peripheral, canonical or marginal. The position that the translation occupies in the receiving culture can determine its representation of the source text: an emergent, avant-garde practice in the periphery is likely to produce a translation that differs markedly from a dominant practice that controls the center, the former inclined toward radical experimentation, the latter toward conservative maintenance of canons.

Toury observes that receiving cultural values are also instrumental in motivating the very choice of a source text for translation, and a "translation policy" can be inferred from a corpus of translations insofar as a succession of choices establishes patterns (Toury 1995: 58). Yet translation patterns are also partial in two senses: they are incomplete in their representation of a source literature, since a literature is never translated in its entirety, always selectively, and they are slanted toward the receiving culture in the choice of source texts, since the decision to translate is usually made by receptors and only texts that are acceptable to receiving cultural values tend to be chosen. As a result, canons of foreign literatures are formed in and

through translation, and these canons can harden into stereotypical representations that diverge to varying degrees from literary canons that have been constructed in the foreign culture.

This point can be illustrated by examining a culture where a significant amount of translated literature is regularly published. I shall choose Italy to continue developing the case considered in the previous section. After World War II the Italian publishing industry grew increasingly dependent on translations, so that, at the beginning of the 1950s, 16 percent of total annual book output consisted of translations, a figure that rose to 20 percent during the 1980s and finally peaked at approximately 25 percent during the 1990s (Turi 1997: 408, 444; Peresson and Mussinelli 2009: 255). In 2008, the number of adult titles published in Italy reached 49,767 (excluding children's books and school textbooks), 10,046 of which were translations (20.1%) (Peresson 2010: 62–63). For the past sixty years, 50 to 60 percent of Italian translations issued annually have taken English as their source language. Given the high volume of translations from English, we might ask: What is the current canon of contemporary United States fiction in Italian translation and what values have given rise to it?

Drawn primarily from a recent printed edition of the *Catalogo dei libri in commercio* (2006), the list of Italian books in print, the data I will present are sufficient to sketch the main tendencies in the selection of US texts for translation and thereby the broad outlines of the Italian canon, even if the figures cannot be taken as a precisely accurate count. The availability of the translations suggests not only that they continue to be commercially viable, capable of selling on the Italian book market, but that they have been invested with various kinds of value by Italian readers, whether judged according to elite or to popular taste. This investment is perhaps most clear in the case of texts that were translated several decades ago but remain in print.

Translations of US bestsellers have consistently thrived on the Italian market. Currently available in Italian are fifty-seven titles by Danielle Steel, fifty-five by Stephen King, twenty-eight by Tom Clancy, twenty by John Grisham, and fifteen by Anne Rice, some of which were first published during the 1970s. The genres of the novels – romance, horror, thriller – explain in part the success of the translations: they appeal to popular taste, enabling the pleasures of vicarious participation grounded on a sympathetic identification with characters (see Bourdieu 1984: 32). Yet because the authors also address material that is specific to the USA, whether settings or themes, some of a historical or topical nature, their appeal is inseparable from the symbolic capital that US culture acquired in Italy during the latter half of the twentieth century. This capital can also explain in part the interest of Italian readers in elite novels which contain realistic depictions of US cultural and social issues, although here a detached appreciation of literary form comes into play, at least with some segments of the audience. Thus, currently available in Italian are twenty-two titles by Joyce Carol Oates, eighteen by Philip Roth, and fourteen each by Raymond Carver and Anne Tyler. Not unexpectedly, given these translation patterns, experimental narratives by US writers are marginal in Italy. The difference in the figures is striking: Italian booksellers are likely to stock only three titles by Donald Barthelme, two by Robert Coover, two by William Gaddis, one by William Gass, one by Kathy Acker, and none by David Markson.

The canon of contemporary US fiction in Italian translation, then, is composed mostly of various forms of realism and culture-specific themes. It can be described as overlapping to some extent with the canon of this fiction in US culture, especially as defined in the academy, but the exclusions are conspicuous, notably the marginal position assigned to experimentalism. At the center of the Italian canon, however, outstripping the elite novels and rivaling the bestsellers in sheer market presence, lies a substantial body of work that is affiliated with the Beat Generation, or that explores nonconformist lives on the fringes of US society, or that falls into the category of hard-boiled crime fiction. Currently available in Italian are thirty-nine titles by Charles Bukowski, thirty-three by Jack Kerouac, twenty-two by William S. Burroughs, twenty by James Ellroy, eighteen by Ed McBain, seventeen by John Fante, and all eight books written by Edward Bunker. Kerouac and Fante have been singled out for special treatment: both have volumes devoted to their work in "I Meridiani" (the highpoints), the series of classics created by the trade publisher Mondadori, where they are positioned among figures in the Western canon like Homer and Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe, Baudelaire and Joyce, on the one hand, and canonical US authors like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, Pound and Faulkner, on the other.

The values underlying the Italian canonization of such authors include of course the profit motive that drives commercial publishing in Italy as elsewhere, along with the prestige that US culture has accrued among Italian audiences and the appeal to popular taste present in realistic narratives. Yet more is clearly at stake because of the genres and themes specific to the writing: the center of the Italian canon ultimately rests on a valorization of a particular brand of romantic individualism, which prizes not only outspoken self-expression but freedom from social constraints to the point of flouting bourgeois respectability by cultivating non-standard language and unconventional, even illicit behavior (see, for example, Lucarelli 2001).

## Translated canons and translation strategies

These values inform not only the choice of works to translate but also a myriad of choices made by the works' translators. As an example, consider the 1996 Italian translation of Edward Bunker's 1973 crime novel *No Beast So Fierce*. To what extent does *Come una bestia feroce* (like a ferocious beast) support a romanticizing response to hard-boiled American fiction? More generally, what can a close reading of this translation disclose about the relations between translated literary canons and the individual translations that comprise them?

In the following passage, the narrator and main character of Bunker's novel, Max Dembo, who is about to be released from prison after serving an eight-year sentence, searches for an inmate he had befriended during his incarceration:

> Aaron Billings, the person I really wanted to see, failed to appear. He was black and would avoid a group of whites, just as I would avoid a group of blacks. The races had become totally polarized during recent years. Because of this I'd talked with Aaron less and less, but our friendship remained.

> He'd stopped me at the dentist's office yesterday (he worked there) and mentioned that he might be transferred to camp and wanted me to help him escape. There'd been no time to talk, and he was going to meet me this morning.
>
> (Bunker 1973: 14)

The Italian version, although it maintains a core semantic correspondence to the English text and even adheres to the English syntax, contains some intriguing shifts, indicated below in bold:

> Aaron Billings, l'uomo che volevo vedere **piú di tutti**, non era fra loro. Era un nero e avrebbe evitato **un drappello** di bianchi esattamente come io avrei evitato un gruppo di neri. Nel corso degli ultimi anni le razze si erano **violentemente divise all'interno della prigione**. A causa di ciò con Aaron parlavo sempre meno, ma la nostra amicizia restava **viva**. **Il giorno precedente** mi aveva fermato nella studio del dentista dove lavorava e mi aveva accennato che forse l'avrebbe trasferito in **un campo di lavoro**. Voleva che lo aiutassi a fuggire. **Al momento** non avevamo potuto parlarne, ma **mi avrebbe spiegato tutto** il mattino del**la mia liberazione**.
>
> (Bortolussi 2001: 14)

Two marked tendencies can be detected here. One involves a higher register and more explicit language than the English. The passage is cast in the current standard dialect of Italian, which deviates from Bunker's conversational use of contractions and at points reverts to greater formality: "yesterday" becomes "il giorno precedente" (the preceding day), "there'd been no time" becomes "al momento" (at the moment), and the omission of the relative pronoun, "that" or "whom," in the clause "the person I really wanted to see," is supplied by "che" (perhaps unavoidably, due to structural differences between the languages, since the absence of "che" would be regarded as an error). The Italian inserts phrases to signify meanings that are left implied in the English. These additions include the location, "all'interno della prigione" (inside the prison), the nature of the "camp," specified as "un campo di lavoro" (a work camp), and the key event of "this morning," namely "la mia liberazione" (my release). Similarly, the English assumes that Billings "was going to meet" Dembo to discuss his "escape," but the Italian spells out the purpose of the meeting: "mi avrebbe spiegato tutto" (he would have explained everything to me).

The other tendency involves a degree of exaggeration that moves the Italian toward melodrama. The simple emphasis in "really," a conversational usage that singles out Billings among the other inmates to whom Dembo says goodbye, is replaced by the intensified "piú di tutti" (more than anyone), a phrase that again makes explicit what is implied in the English. The rather detached reference to the "races" as "totally polarized" is transformed into a suggestion of physical aggression, "violentemente divise" (violently divided), while the loose "group" of white prisoners becomes a more organized "drappello," a military term that is also used for athletic teams: "a squad." And where the English merely states that Dembo's

"friendship" with Billings "remained," the Italian adds "viva," which can carry the force of "alive," but also "intense."

The two tendencies in the translated passage, one formalizing and explicitating, the other intensifying and melodramatizing, join to form a distinct interpretation of the English. The first shows an effort to create an Italian text that is immediately intelligible by filling in gaps in the reader's knowledge and thereby compensating for cultural differences. This tendency is offset by the adherence to the English syntax, which creates a series of relatively short sentences that imitate Bunker's "abrupt style" while reflecting the movement in contemporary Italian prose away from the traditional periodic constructions toward greater simplicity (see Mengaldo 1991 and Testa 1997). This Italian intertext prevents the translation from recreating the polysyndeton in Bunker's penultimate sentence, the repetition of "and" so characteristic of Hemingway's prose, which constitutes part of the English intertext. Yet the clarity and precision of the translation works to enhance the tendency toward melodrama, fashioning an image of prison life as extreme. The Italian does not reproduce every stylistic feature of the English text, but it can nonetheless support the fascination with nonconformist and criminal experience found in the Italian canon of US fiction.

Bunker's copious lexicon of slang and obscenity proves to be particularly challenging to match in Italian. Some of his slang is dated, specific to the 1960s, or affiliated with African-American usage. Dembo's conversations with Billings, for instance, contain phrases like "up tight," rendered as "teso" (tense), and "right on," rendered as "giusto" (right) (Bunker 1973: 16, 231; Bortolussi 1996: 16, 277). In each case, the translation establishes a semantic correspondence but raises the register and loses the ethnic affiliation. Similar shifts occur with underworld and prison argot. A "hit man" becomes a "sicario" (assassin), "the big yard" becomes "i cortili delle prigioni" (prison courtyards), and "fingered" becomes "tradito" (betrayed) (Bunker 1973: 68, 194, 269; Bortolussi 1996: 79, 232, 322). The recurrent obscenities receive Italian counterparts, although the sheer brutality of the English is not always possible to recreate. Verbal abuse like "motherfucker" and "fuck your mother" is rendered as "figlio di puttana" (son of [a] whore) and "fottiti" (fuck you), but the ejaculation, "Fuck no!" becomes "No, cazzo!" (no, cock), and "bullshitter" becomes "ballista" (liar) (Bunker 1973: 28, 110, 145; Bortolussi 1996: 31, 132, 174). Still, the translation assembles a broad variety of non-standard Italian forms to signify an analogous violation of linguistic taboos, assimilating the English text to the increasing orality of Italian literary prose (Spunta 2004).

By far the most suggestive shifts carry implications for Dembo's values. When a robbery turns him into a hunted fugitive and he decides to murder the friend who betrayed him to the police, he considers the people who would be hurt by his action, concluding that "They would never understand the law of my world, which was all I had to live by" (Bunker 1973: 270). The Italian version alters the last clause to "l'unica che io potessi seguire per sopravvivere" (the only [law] I could follow in order to survive), reducing a code of criminal conduct to mere animal instinct, characterizing Dembo as desperate whereas in the English he is more detached and calculating (Bortolussi 1996: 323). In such passages, the Italian version inscribes the English text with the strongly deterministic notion of human action that

characterizes naturalism in the international history of the novel, including the subgenre of hard-boiled crime fiction.

It is extremely important that the shifts in the translation not be regarded dismissively as errors in need of correction. They show, rather, that the translator has applied his own interpretants in translating the novel, a concept of equivalence (the degree of formal and semantic correspondence permitted by linguistic differences) and a fictional discourse (a naturalism that befits criminality), and these choices result in a nuanced interpretation. To treat a specific verbal choice as incorrect without careful examination of the context risks the unwitting assumption of a different interpretation as a standard of evaluation. This move is questionable because no translation can reproduce a source text with completeness and precision or without a gain of translating-language form and meaning. Worse, it deprives the translator of the right to interpret the source text for audiences in the receiving situation.

In the case of Bunker's novel, we should think twice about depriving the translator of this right because he is so highly accomplished. Stefano Bortolussi, born in 1959, is an experienced professional who over the past two decades has translated more than sixty contemporary Anglophone novels into Italian. His authors include many who write genre fiction, including hard-boiled crime novels. Among them are James Lee Burke, James Ellroy, Carl Hiaasen, Stephen King, Val McDermid, Richard Price, and John Godey, the author of *The Taking of Pelham 123*. Bortolussi's Italian version has produced an interpretation that creates analogous effects against the backdrop of current Italian literature. His work seems to have been powerful enough to contribute to that literature by helping to inspire, along with various foreign and Italian traditions, a new generation of writers to deploy crime fiction in representing Italian society. Canons of foreign literatures in translation, although undoubtedly exclusionary to some extent and even stereotypical in the images they create of those literatures, rest on relatively coherent translation strategies that can exert a decisive influence on literary traditions in the receiving situation.

To focus on translation is to redefine the study of literature in the most material ways. The production, circulation, and reception of translations do not simply involve crossing national boundaries, but inserting texts into global networks that are inflected by national literary traditions, to be sure, but that reveal the national as constructed by international affiliations. These networks change from one historical period to another, and as we move closer to the twenty-first century, the speed and sophistication of print and electronic media enable them to multiply and overlap. The same source text may be translated into many languages, assimilated in varying degrees to receiving cultural values. To understand the impact of translation in the creation of world literature, we need to examine the canons developed by translation patterns within the receiving situation as well as the interpretations that translations inscribe in the source texts. To be productive, to yield the most incisive findings, this sort of examination must combine distant and close reading of translations to explore the relations between canons and interpretations. For most readers, translated texts constitute world literature, even if we are still in the process of learning how to read translations as translations, as texts in their own right which are significantly independent of the source texts they translate.

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# 20
# WORLD LITERATURE BETWEEN HISTORY AND THEORY

*Vilashini Cooppan*

The "world" in world literature for some critics carries the cosmopolitan inflections of *Weltliteratur*'s founding problematic of texts that transcend geographic and temporal boundaries to resonate in contexts other than their own (Moretti 2000, 2003; Damrosch 2003; Pizer 2006; Dimock 2008; Lionnet [Lionnet and Shih 2005], and Apter 2006 as well as Jameson 1981 and Said 1993 in a previous generation, and Auerbach 1952 before that). World literature's "world" has equally been understood in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's terms as a hegemonizing hermeneutic that effectively flattens the globe again. Via the steam-rolling modes of literature in translation and the distant reading of large movements of form, goes Spivak's argument, world literature extends from the center (Europe, the European novel, European languages, European capitalism) and converts the periphery to mere data. One might say, recalling the opening of *The Communist Manifesto*, that the specter of data-fication haunts world literature. This latter-day ghost inspires the charge that world literature essentially *forgets* how to read (Spivak 2003), *forgets* how to read "*literarily* (with intensive textual scrutiny, defiance, and metatheoretical awareness)," in Haun Saussy's words (Saussy 2006: 23), and even *forgets* in its reading that there is no singular "world" per se but only a changing assemblage of localities that coalesce into globalities of many kinds, each striated by the transverse networks of language, region, area, and moment that simultaneously shape a single text and link it to others.

What does it mean to say, either from the outside or the inside, that a field *forgets*? And what might it mean to take on the critical voice of asking a field to *remember*? Beneath these critical imperatives to operate in the modality of *historical* consciousness, is there not a prototypical subject of world literature, a critic-reader who makes the map or tears it up, sees some world or blows it open, reads with specialized knowledge and linguistic precision or casts those field tools to the winds? My language is apocalyptic, in part because of world literature's status as the very death of discipline and craft. I have enlarged this rhetoric so as to ask who speaks through it. What is the difference between a world literature articulated through voice (and

thus through a prototypical subject), that ephemeral "we" of this changing profession and this emergent field, and a world literature not spoken so much as mapped, through assemblages, linkages, and lines across which there can flow a range of forms and entities? This is to return to what Spivak, citing Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature," calls the "cartographic arrogance" of returning peripheral data to a metropolitan sender, and to consider the possibility that it's not the mapmaker but the map that matters (Spivak 2003: 104). Could this map be conjectured as conjuncture: that is to say, as a crossroads of flows and lateral connections, of connectivities and disjunctures, of coming close and zooming out; in short, as a disciplinary topography in motion?

Movement, in the uneven, discontinuous sense I want to consider it, exists at odds with the larger modality of disciplinary history, with its cumulative story, filling in of historical and geographical absences, and archiving of potential candidates for yet one more invocation, from yet one more locale, of a prescient idea of world or worlding that "world literature today" fulfills. I am interested in the tensions between this eschatological dimension of world literature history and a networked movement that operates in part as memory. I am not talking about the anthropomorphized memory *of* the field of world literature, but rather about the ways in which certain concepts of memory, with their breaks, disjunctures, and slippages, might productively interrupt what is sometimes cast (and often denigrated) as "doing" world literature. As a field heuristic, I begin by envisioning world literature not as a Derridean structure of reading (Spivak's corrective, in which the critic encounters the texts of world literature without guarantee of some full and complete answer back) but instead as a rhizomatic assemblage, in the style of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

A rhizomatic map, according to the authors of *A Thousand Plateaus*, has "multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back 'to the same.'" "The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged 'competence'" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 13). Tracing belongs to the larger domain of root thinking, which manifests itself, in disciplinary terms, as origin stories, "we" enunciations, and the work of a kind of auto-history or what Deleuze and Guattari call long-term memory. This memory is centralized, cast through a sequential-teleological line of descent, inheritance, and trace, and, to use their favored word, "arborescent" (16). The methodological work of world literature, however, also reveals the salutary operation of short-term memory. Less tree-like than root-based, the latter is rhizomatically dispersed. Short-term memory eschews single lines, choosing instead to "act at a distance, come or return a long time after, but always under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity." Imagined through short-term memory's spatial and temporal unevenness and interconnectedness, world literature loses both the implicit center that troubles Spivak and the fictive "we" whose critical community I have sought to disrupt. The danger in articulating a world-literature "we" is the tendency to then craft maps of competence rather than performance, effectively privileging the field's anthropomorphized sense of self (often congealed into readers, anthologies, companions) over the imprecise scene of the field's becoming.

In contrast to the fixed and fixing world vision that Spivak, conjuring the psychoanalytic scene and subject of fictive mastery, calls "Moretti-style scopic

mapmaking," this essay maps the "world" in world literature as a *network* (Spivak 2003: 104). Representational forms and historical events flow across this network, periodically condensing into particular nodes and acquiring historical density and affective intensity, only to shift and slide into yet another configuration or constellation. The nodal points identify different units for comparison – genre, mode, period, region, language, topoi, event. Yet, in the desubjectified map I am making no one unit adds up to a whole and no one (unit or mapmaker) provides the magic measure or Prospero's rod for complete comparison across the multiple seams of world literary history. Once the disciplinary subject is out of the network, the question becomes not who is remembering what (or forgetting what), but rather in what ways and to what ends kinds of movement saturate a field of inquiry that is itself happening. The following is an itinerant topography for the theory of world literature. I explore three critical categories constituted by and as movement – history, genre, and affect – and ask what different objects of knowledge enter the disciplinary gaze as a result of this re-visioning of the world as a network system.

Inspired both by *A Thousand Plateaus* and the world systems theory of Fernand Braudel, Manuel De Landa's *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (1997) casts flows (whether of lava, genes, linguistic memes, money or "other 'stuff'") as the substance of history (260). Flows, De Landa argues, can be homogenized into hierarchies and strata or pass through more heterogeneous interactions, aggregations, and mixtures and so become destratified. A nonlinear history captures both these processes, as well as the interactive energy operating between the various planes and across the network as a whole. In a network, different phases don't take the form of a sequence or rise; instead they coexist. Literary networks produce objects that stratify and destratify, turn dominant and just as readily turn "minor," to borrow a term from Deleuze and Guattari's study of Franz Kafka (1986). Literary "stuff" lends itself to the network model, whether the intersecting lines that link individual national works to one another in patterns of what used to be called literary influence or the recent world-scale models of circulation and interaction that go beyond the author-text system to reflect on various currencies of flow, including the material histories of publication, translation, adaptation, and other instances of literary uptake, as well as the ghostly histories of textual resonance and interconnection that I have evoked through the figure of short-term memory's rhizomatic assemblage.

Literary genres lend themselves to both histories. Like particular organizations of capital (merchant industry, city-states, nations, transnational corporations), genres are subject to rising fortunes, sometimes-vast circulations, and frequently relocated centers. Operating through processes of interaction, selection, and combination, they reveal an essentially recombinant structure at any nodal point that operates at some distance from the larger, and problematic, picture of generic evolution or development (the literary equivalent of Wallersteinian world systems theory's succession of literary cores and peripheries). Genre would at first glance appear to teleologize literary history by codifying the vagaries of literary movement (the short starts, the dead ends) into something like literary *progress*. But as the comparative literary theorist Claudio Guillén explains, "the concept of genre looks backward and forward at the same time": backward to older works and forward to new ones in which generic codes find themselves repeated and transformed (1971: 42, 109).

Genres embed a past, whether a formal set of codes or the historical and social circumstances that accompanied them, effectively "sedimenting," as Fredric Jameson claims, their historicity into their form (1981, 161).

Jameson approaches his seminal notion of narrative's political unconscious through an encounter with an older tradition of critics, including Walter Benjamin and Geörgy Lukács, for whom the novel is the melancholy of modernity itself. In the novel, that earlier and still provocative argument goes, newly bourgeois and nationalist Western European culture registers its loss of a folk past and communal practices and genres of story-telling. For all that the novel's content may be, in Lukács's words, "inconsolably sad," there nonetheless exists an "affirmation which the very form of the novel expresses." "Its song of comfort rings out of the dawning recognition that traces of lost meaning are to be found everywhere; that the enemy comes from the same lost home as the knight and defender of the essence; that life had to lose its immanence of meaning so that it might be equally present everywhere" (Lukács 1983: 123). The novel, in other words, is the record of a rigorously secular world – a world without "immanence of meaning" – in which meaning, like print capitalism itself, is "found everywhere." This omnipresent meaning – the meaning that the novel gives to form – makes it, like God, the site of powerful longings. For Lukács, indeed, the novel is the epic of a world without God.

What could be more secular (and simultaneously more haunted, animistically ghosted by a séance-like communion of voices, dialects, perspectives, points of view, timelines of becoming) than the novel? The essence of dialectical contradiction, this genre has always invited Marxist critics. Now critics inspired by the conjunction of world systems theory and world literature theory turn again to the novel, cautioned but not deterred by the charge that it serves as the fixed gold standard of a proto-imperializing method. Without discounting the diversifying import of Spivak's question "why should the (novel in the) whole world as our object of investigation be the task of every comparatist?" (2003: 104), local investigations of the novel can nonetheless aspire to global-scale inquiry. I believe the novel gives world literature theory a textual practice of narrative *movement* – time rendered as form – that unsettles the seemingly closed end of a history and unfixes the seemingly closed interpretation of what that history might mean. I am suggesting that the novelistic genre is networkable as history and memory are networkable: in other words, subject to flows forward and back, accumulations and emptying out, the sedimentation, fixing, and burying even of some events, formal or historical, and a series of disruptive movements across those events. Genre might be said to work simultaneously as long-term memory (the rise of the novel, say, or the large-scale histories of literary form and period) and as short-term memory, that fleeting condensation of a particular moment's events, a flashing forth in some represented form and even some affective density of the history behind the genre.

By virtue of this double status, genre attunes us to history both as a wide swath of time and as a singular point in time, the former collectively experienced and the latter individually localizable, perhaps even radically singular in the style of those historical events that we understand to be non-comparable. The preservation of some historical specificity, experiential particularity, and even some fundamental inaccessibility of traumatic experiences to representation is a crucial deterrent to the

fearful specter of a comparative method that proceeds by the flattening mode of progressive historical analogy. In this mode, a single experience of trauma is assumed to work across such diverse and differently situated events as slavery, colonization, empire, genocide, war, and apartheid, all major events represented in the pages of the world novel. The raw transhistoricism that troubles world-scale comparison threatens to turn the world literary history of the world novel into an encyclopedic account of a set of formal and narrative codes that hold true across differences in space, time, and event.

By contrast, the kind of theory I have in mind both makes synthesis and draws out difference. It envisions a totality (the novelistic history of globe-spanning regimes of racial capital), yet holds on to particularity (slavery's trauma is not empire's, nor apartheid's), all the while paying close attention to the rich diversity of techniques through which the novel registers the shock of each wrenching event in the history of modern racism. Finally, this genre theory locates other, more invisible quantities such as the haunting presence of earlier figurations of "race" that give body to new ones under different moments of racial capitalist modernity, or the work of the novel's affective capabilities, its capacity to produce particular styles of feeling (what Lukács [1983] called the novel's "song of comfort") about and around certain kinds of racial subjects and racial regimes. Consider the sympathy that motors the novel of abolition and the loss that subtends the novel of postslavery memory. So, counting forward from Aphra Behn's *Oronooko* (1688), Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), those "first" novels of the English tradition, and J.H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1787), a French novel set in Mauritius that inaugurates a rich Indian Ocean tradition of literary representations of slavery, world literature novel theory can track the figure of the noble slave and the quantity of sympathy attached to it back to a broadly Atlantic nineteenth-century sentimental mode encompassed by Claire de Duras's *Ourika* (France, 1823), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (United States, 1853), and Gertrudis de Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (Cuba, 1841). Later traditions reverse that polarity through the aggressively desentimentalized portraits of New World slavery in the late-twentieth-century North American and Caribbean postmodern novels of William Faulkner, Ishmael Reed, Caryl Phillips, Toni Morrison, or Édouard Glissant. Here the speaking "I" made famous by the slave narrative is multiplied into what Bakhtin (1983) calls the many-voiced or heteroglossic form of the novel, with the net result that slave and master, slave ancestor, and slave descendant speak *together* without securing a "racial subject" or a single "racial feeling." Tracking the circulation of some sympathy- and sentiment-saturated texts and others that reverse or refuse the quantity, allows us to see how genre, mode, voice, and history emerge as units traversing a network in a steady state of transformation.

Affect, the final unit in my world literary theory of the novel, also operates in this networked economy. Affects refer to the elementary drives that provided the basis of Freud's economic analysis of psychic mechanisms. The emergence of an affect situates the subject in relation to her own history, the set of circumstances and relations that first gave rise to a particular passion and that persist in the secondary experience of it. As Sara Ahmed explains in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), affects do not exist *in* themselves or *in* particular entities (*in* a subject, *in* an object, *in*

a sign) but instead emerge as "an effect of the circulation" among them. Signs, Ahmed continues, "increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (8).

For theorists of the Deleuzean tradition, affect has been understood to operate as a kind of a memory or trace of something long gone, unfolding in uneven fashion – a corollary to the kind of movement I have sketched in genre. So, writes Brian Massumi (2002), borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari, affects exist "in excess of any narrative or functional line" (26). Speaking at the level of the body, Massumi notes that affects "infold *contexts* … the *trace* of past actions, *including a trace of their contexts*." What is distinctive about affect for Massumi is precisely the nontemporal, nonhistorical nature of the trace, its registering of the shock of an experience on a visceral-bodily level. Understood both as Massumi's embedded bodily trace and Ahmed's circulatory system, affective densities could be as much a part of world literary analysis as the flows of genres and modes or the transverse networks of influence and adaptation. Where much world literature theory traces how a literary genre, mode, or school moves across the globe, affect adds the further dimension of how literature *moves* to this story, how certain organizations of form structure particular stances toward histories of loss, violence, depersonalization, and resistance.

Affect in this sense is not interchangeable with passions and emotions (such as the "melancholy" Lukács famously attributes to the novel). As Massumi explains, where emotions capture affect, subjecting them to narrativizable meaning, affects operate in nonlinear, nonhermeneutic, nonsignifying ways, lingering on beyond the point of capture and opening themselves to potential liberations, escapes, and future freedoms. This is a distinction of particular use in the reading of the archive of foundational violence. The literature of South African apartheid and its aftermath, for example, regularly traffics in emotion (guilt, shame, anger, forgiveness) in order to work through the past in some linear form even as it also registers the uncertain project of living with the past, infolding it and exceeding it, holding on to it and moving through it. With its mobilities and intensities, captured in the guiding figure of the network, the theory of affect helps to describe the cultural work that post-apartheid literature performs along certain "recognizable" lines (liberation, reconciliation, nation-building), as well as the unique capacity of literature to do something beyond the discourses of the state and to bring the reader into contact with experiences not entirely subsumed to representation, not fully plotted or placed into the narratives of meaning and their implicitly territorializing work. To build a nation through a collectivized affect such as shame or guilt necessarily erases distinctions between different subjects and different histories, as well as the ongoing present of an inequity that also has to be redressed. The danger of such nation building is that it fetishizes wounding narratives of pain, injury, and loss as what is required for every citizen to know, thus making wound synonymous with nation and effectively producing a melancholic nation that holds on to its past.

Texts that mime and mine the memories and memory processes of "real victims" of a "real past" are a dominant strain of post-apartheid South African literature, and an urgent one, given the need to tell what apartheid kept unknown, secret, and disavowed. Truth and Reconciliation literature organizes and reproduces national affects of shame, guilt, anger, and forgiveness, often via narrative codings like the

testimonial form that inserts the plot lines of crime, investigation, confrontation, and forgiveness; the juridico-political space of the court-room; the confessional mode; and the recursive temporality of trauma and memory into the post-apartheid national novel. Ultimately the victim becomes a kind of raw material, the source for proxy affective experience but not, in the end, for the unsettling work that is the real work of affect's network: the apprehension, as of some shock to the system, of the historical conditions that keep one individual's experience partially unknowable and inaccessible to another. This unknowability and incommensurability, a kind of dark pocket or blank space in the map of world literature, offers world literature theory an approach to the question that it is perhaps most important to ask.

For the comparatist, the question "*what* do you compare?" asked by in-laws, people at parties, oneself in the early hours of the morning, is always ongoing. Nations and national literatures, individual textual thematics or devices, larger historical political regimes within which a particular literary tradition or school emerges, finds hegemony, dead-ends? World literature can be interested in all of these, and beyond them, in the possibility of a comparative literary history focused on foundational violence and its traces in world literature. As focused as the field is on the question of *what* to compare, it should be just as concerned with *how*. For world literature is not an ontology but an epistemology, not a catalogue of literary data but a way of reading and even, dare one suggest, thinking: a philosophy in, and of, motion.

A world literature networked in the way I have begun to suggest, through the eminently networkable categories of history, memory, genre, and affect, cuts against teleologies of literary or disciplinary progress. If the network has sometimes seemed to situate all its objects in a single dehistoricized flow (a frequent critique of *A Thousand Plateaus* and its critical descendants), the network I have begun to evoke could also provide a way to think the divergences and differences among the various histories behind the texts of world literature. A networked literary history of the sort I am imagining will linger on local contexts as much as global movements, on the textual devices (genre, mode, figure, textuality, affect) that works pass through as much as the larger trajectory of textual flows themselves. And finally, via the seeming closure of a method that claims (as Deleuze and Guattari do) *not* to be doing history, a networked literary history may rearticulate the question of historical violence in order to place traumatic event horizons such as slavery, empire, colonization, historical loss, and state violence into the world system of world literature.

This is not to make history the cause or content of form. I am trying instead to name two modalities in which literary history proceeds. One is cumulative and ordered, sequenced and disciplinarily oriented to its own story. The other is disjunctive and ruptured, suffused with historical events other than its own telling: for example, the colonial slave trade and the rise of national mercantile capitalism that coincide with the emergence of the novel as a form and its discourses of sympathy, or the backdrop of some traumatic event that resonates into a certain literary constellation, say post-Holocaust literature, postcolonial literature, and post-apartheid literature. The world literatures of these world events hold history subject to memory. History is reactivated and retold, often held on to and replayed, but sometimes also worked through or displaced to the edges of *another* event that

conjures the earlier trauma by analogy. Think of the resonances of the Nazi concentration camp in J.M. Coetzee's renderings of South African apartheid in *The Life and Times of Michael K* and *Elizabeth Costello*, or the shadow of slavery in the postcolonial Caribbean of global tourism and eco-imperialism described in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove*, and Édouard Glissant's *Tout-Monde*.

The literary networks constellated around the historical events I have named are dense with memory: the memory of the event, the textual memories of the forms through which those events are told, and even the modality of memory as itself a kind of networked movement, sometimes in the style of a *longue durée* and other times more something that rubs up against the immediacy of an event, causing one time to touch another instantaneously, in a shock or flash. Aspects of form intervene in this process, staging their own work, their own formal responses that cannot always be returned to the event. Literature in this sense does, as Derrida suggests, exist beyond the event. It is part of world literature's work to capture the distinct nature of how each text works in its moment. But a merely formal history risks loosing the larger, animating, and perhaps most challenging question of world literature: what do we compare? I have invoked slavery, colonization, imperialism, racial genocide, and apartheid. My point is not to propose that one turns to another or to imagine some transhistorical measure that would sequence these historical events (though certainly this is one way, as Paul Gilroy [1993] has noted, to describe modernity).

In seeking to turn world literature's attention to those moments of affective intensity in certain text networks around world historical events of foundational violence, I have wanted less to characterize the "feeling" of certain historical ages in yet another long-term memory history than to pursue the possibility of a new kind of formal history. Looking at the production and exchange of certain affects infolded into particular representations reveals a sedimentary, rather than sedentary, history of forms – the accumulation of a set of affective intensities that *remain* even as they are rearticulated and resignified over the course of geographic and historical movement.

Affect's network economy of trace and circulation counters the linear, looping plots of acting out and working through which trauma theory has cast as the narrative work of certain literatures of memory, sometimes proposing their status as *comparable*, even analogizable, histories. Yet affect, like genre, is not mere network, the absence of historical lines, the emptying out of history's sequence into a constellation of flashpoints. My larger vision has been of a nonlinear history as central to world literature thinking: a model whose access via literatures of memory both invites the consideration of historical temporality and in various ways exceeds or entangles it with a map of multiplicity, incommensurability, and perpetual discontinuity. Through the figure of the rhizomatic map, I suggest the need to see fissures and disjunctures in any story of history, including disciplinary history.

Every unit of comparison is only fictively fixed, whether genre or memory or book history or period or place or language: all are moving targets and each keeps comparison a practice in motion. The kind of memory work I have begun to evoke, embedded within a theory of genre as itself a practice of memory and a theory of

affect as a particular instance of short-term memory, reorients novel theory from the putative lines of national literary histories toward a comparative world literature in which the world is not some abstract global space, but rather, one that emerges from the intersecting and overlapping histories of racial capitalism, racialized subjects, and racial-imperial regimes of terror. This is not *the* world but *a* world, one whose foundational violence is central to the emergence of what we call modernity and perhaps to that particular technology of modernity known as the novel. Worlding the novel means placing it close to several interlinked histories of violence, a task for which maps and lines alone (the emblems of world literature method on the one hand and national literary tradition on the other) will not suffice. Perhaps the network can proffer one answer and so continue to situate the "world" in world literature as a moving category in every sense.

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# 21
# WORLD LITERATURE AND POSTMODERNISM

*Hans Bertens*

## Postmodernism

A discussion of postmodernism and world literature will obviously benefit from a clear understanding of the terms involved. As is usually the case in literary studies, however, achieving that ideal is easier said than done. Even apart from the ongoing debate over the term "world literature" addressed by various essays in this volume, the concept of postmodernism has steadfastly eluded consensus right from the beginning (see Bertens 1995). However, if we simplify things to a considerable degree, we may distinguish two major lines of argument as regards postmodern literature. The first argues for writing that essentially is the literary reflection of the complex of social and cultural perspectives – the so-called socio-cultural formation – that begins to dominate the various Western cultures at a given point during the postwar period. Although theorists disagree about the exact starting-point of this dominance, we may place it somewhere between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s. The second line of argument stays largely within the world of literature itself and claims a far more exclusively literary pedigree for postmodern literature. From this perspective postmodernism is not so much a direct or indirect reflection of a changing social-cultural environment, but the outcome of a largely autonomously literary development: a reaction against the literary realism of the 1950s and against the modernism of the inter-war period and its 1950s tail end. This postmodernism is clearly familiar with the avant-garde movements of the prewar period – Dada, Surrealism, Futurism, and other movements – and with the radically experimental modernism of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (as opposed to the more traditional high modernism of, say, E.M. Forster, Thomas Mann or Robert Musil). Yet it goes beyond the historical avant-gardes – or falls short of them, depending on one's view – in its indifference towards the Freudian unconscious, which was so central to Surrealism, and its refusal to revive the deliberately offensive political stance of Dada and other movements. Proponents of postmodernism as the product of socio-cultural circumstances show relatively little interest in its formal properties and focus largely on its thematics, whereas those who see postmodernism as a development largely internal to literature itself define it through its formal features.

To complicate matters further, neither of these two camps is necessarily unanimous in its views of postmodern literature. Those who see postmodernism first of all as the product of a socio-cultural formation that has at some point superseded an earlier modernist formation may be further subdivided into a group of critics who see postmodernism in terms of a sharp decline in political awareness and social responsibility and those who see it as more or less the opposite, as the dawn of a new social and political constellation. The first group, which includes such influential Marxist critics as Fredric Jameson and Terry Eagleton – but also, paradoxically enough, critics from the religious Right – sees postmodernism as the cultural expression of a new phase in the development of capitalism. This so-called late capitalism, an agressive, no-holds-barred, global form of capitalism, has, at least in the First World, routed the last pockets of resistance against its advance and has succeeded in invading every nook and cranny of both the public and the private sphere. Its cultural products have given up on the critical distance between culture and commerce still preserved by modernist art and are content to merely serve this materialistic master. This postmodern culture has in fact itself been fully co-opted by the market, so that the old Marxist distinction between base and superstructure has become irrelevant. For Jameson, postmodernism has abandoned the bite of parody for the irrelevance of pastiche, has abandoned authentic emotion for "intensities" – feelings that are essentially "free-floating and impersonal and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria" (Jameson 1991: 16) – and has abandoned historical analysis for an eternal present; all in all, it has given up on depth and embraced a sometimes glittering but always deplorable superficiality. The postmodernism that is targeted in such unequivocal terms by Jameson and others includes the formally experimental postmodernism mentioned above – which I will discuss in a moment – but is by no means limited to it.

For the other group of critics who see postmodernism largely in thematic terms, postmodernism does not at all spell the end of serious culture but rather marks the beginning of a new and progressive era. For these critics, too, postmodernism is the reflection of a new socio-cultural condition. But instead of the all-pervasive superficiality that is the upshot of a devilish pact with the forces of international capitalism, they see a postmodernism that has liberated itself from the shackles of an earlier totalitarian, mysogynistic, racist, and deeply repressive modernity. This new condition is essentially the result of massive socio-cultural changes whose beginnings we can trace back to the 1950s and early 1960s and which in the last forty-odd years have transformed the Western world, in spite of fierce conservative resistance. This new postmodern cultural condition is characterized by an openness, a flexibility, and a tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty that were wholly lacking in an earlier, modern condition that was dominated by a deep-seated fear of uncertainty, impurity, and ambivalence, and was therefore always on its guard against the threat of contamination and against losing control. That modern condition, which remained virtually unchallenged well into the 1950s, was characterized by the countless boundaries it had erected to protect itself from what it saw as dangerous anarchy: boundaries between the races, between a "male" and a "female" sphere, between social classes, between "normal" and unacceptable forms of sexuality, between the sacred and the profane, between high art and popular art, and so on and

so forth. The result, in hindsight, from a postmodern perspective, was an absurdly class-, race-, sex- and gender-conscious world that resorted to all sorts of oppression to maintain the established, "natural" order.

Under the postmodern condition, according to this perspective, modern differentiation and hierarchization have lost much – although by no means all – of their power and influence. Formerly unassailable boundaries have dissolved or are simply ignored and former centers of power have lost their once towering legitimacy. The stable hierarchies of the modern condition have made place for a socio-cultural landscape in which social and cultural hierarchies have become much more provisional and temporary. Most importantly, the socially imposed silence of those who used to be marginalized has been shattered by a plethora of voices from all sides: formerly unheard feminist, ethnic, same-sex, and other voices now compete for our attention from a relatively equal position with the white male voices that until fairly recently completely dominated the scene.

This thematic view of postmodernism and, implictly, of postmodern literature as the cultural reflection of a new postmodern condition, casts such a wide net that it catches virtually everything written in the last forty years. *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology* (Geyh et al. 1998) provides a case in point. Next to the formally experimental writers of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Richard Brautigan, Ishmael Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Robert Coover, and others), we find the "New Journalism" of the 1960s and 1970s (Norman Mailer, Truman Capote), the "cyberpunk" of the 1980s and 1990s (William Gibson, Neal Stephenson), but most of all we find representatives of the post-1960s boom in Afro-American writing and other, often more recent ethnic literatures such as Native American literature, Mexican American literature, Chinese American literature, Japanese American literature, and so on. In fact, pretty much the full spectrum of post-1950s American literature is claimed for postmodernism. "Postmodern" almost equals "contemporary" here, an equation that is also implicit in Fredric Jameson's view of postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984, 1991). Given the wide range of strategies, techniques and styles that we find in post-1950s American literature, virtually equating "postmodern" with "contemporary" is not very helpful from the point of view of literary classification. Moreover, "postmodern" becomes a virtually infinite category. The end of late capitalism is not in sight, despite the recent crisis, and the socio-cultural developments of the 1960s and 1970s that resulted in a new and unprecedented cultural diversity are also still with us.

A definition of postmodern literature in terms of a world-wide socio-economic or socio-cultural development is, because of its inclusiveness, far more satisfactory from the perspective of cultural historians than from a literary-historical point of view. It largely ignores the formal experimentalism that for the other major critical camp is the hallmark of postmodern literature. For those critics, literary postmodernism builds upon the experimental side of high modernism – e.g. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* – but goes beyond modernism in its more radical but also more light-hearted questioning of language, of the subject, of knowledge, of reality itself. Usually playful and ironic – certainly in its earlier phase – its rewritings of earlier texts, literary or otherwise, and of history itself, emphasize that reality always comes to us through discursive frames and that it is

therefore inevitably already interpreted in one way or another. In a later phase, exemplified in American postmodernism by such works as Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and Robert Coover's *The Public Burning* (1977) and in the United Kingdom by Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984), political engagement provides a more directly moral framework for postmodern fiction's wild improbabilities, dazzling displays of self-reflexivity – including unsettling asides to the reader – and general authorial zaniness

This postmodern literature achieves its effects through a wide range of self-reflexive, metafictional techniques and strategies that disturb the illusion of reality and always foreground the fictional character of the text in question. Inevitably, postmodernism's flaunting of reality, multiple endings, ontological breaks – the author entering his or her fictional world, for instance – alternative histories, adaptations of literary classics, and so on, call into question the relation between text and world, its referentiality. In some postmodern texts, the potential referentiality that their language inevitably carries is so overwhelmed by a barrage of metafictional devices that we cannot seriously connect them to the world as we know it. For some critics, such as Linda Hutcheon in her influential *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), their complete lack of referentiality qualifies them as late modernist rather than postmodern. For those who make a distinction between this late modernism – or "limit-modernism" according to Brian McHale (1987: 13), a category in which he includes Samuel Beckett's *Trilogy* – and what they define as postmodern literature, true postmodernism succeeds in striking a balance between referentiality and non-referentiality. It does so by presenting us with two incompatible sets of reading instructions. On the one hand, it offers textual elements that strongly suggest referentiality and that create the illusion of reality as we know it (or think we know it). On the other hand, however, it also offers elements that counteract that illusion and suggest that we are dealing with an autonomous verbal construction. In other words, we get elements that suggests depth and meaning and that invite traditional interpretation, while simultaneously other elements will thwart or even ridicule attempts at interpretation. Such postmodern texts, then, sit on the fence between referentiality and non-referentiality, effectively setting up a dialogue between a representational and an anti-representational reading stratgegy.

## World literature

Claiming this formally experimental postmodernism for world literature is almost too easy. Critics agree that both its direct precursors and earliest manifestations are thoroughly international. They will point to language stretched to breaking-point in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), written by an Irishman living in Paris, to the (verbatim) rewriting of Cervantes' *Don Quijote* in the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges's story "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" (1939) and to the alternative yet not mutually exclusive narrative scenarios in his "The Garden of Forking Paths" (1949), both included in the enormously influential 1962 translation of Borges's short-story collection *Ficciones*. ("The Garden" had already been published thirteen years earlier, surprisingly enough in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, but its effective life as

world literature dates from the translation of *Ficciones*.) They will point to language coming closer and closer to absolute silence, but paradoxically still surviving, in the so-called *Trilogy* by Samuel Beckett, another Irishman living in France, and writing in French, with his own translations into English following suit (*Molloy*, 1951, *Malone Dies*, 1956, *The Unnamable*, 1957).

Critics will point as well to the French *nouveau roman* and especially to its major representative Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose polemical collection of essays, *Pour un nouveau roman* of 1955, appeared as *For a New Novel* in 1963 and whose departure from tradition entered the awareness of a large Anglophone reading public when the English novelist John Fowles, in his *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), interrupted his at first rather straightforward historical novel to openly reflect on the impossibility of writing a straightforward historical novel "in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes" (Fowles 1996: 97). Finally, critics will point to Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), a hilarious satire on middle-brow seriousness in poetry, and on wild self-projection in interpretation, by a Russian writing in English. Some of these critics may argue that Robbe-Grillet's position in *Pour un nouveau roman*, with its insistence on the autonomy of fictional realities, is "limit-modernist" rather than postmodern (as they may do with regard to Beckett's 1950s novels) but they, too, will agree that the exploration of fiction's possibilities and impossibilities that we find in Robbe-Grillet's *Dans le Labyrinthe* (1959) (in which an author turns out to have created a fragmented novel-length narrative on the basis of objects present in his room) or that we find in Beckett's work has functioned as an essential stage in the development of postmodern literature.

Given this list of precursors (or, depending on one's view, early postmodernists), it is not surprising that in the first decade after its academic codification in the 1960s postmodern literature was first of all an American (both North and South, with, for the latter, next to Borges, pretty quickly also Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez) and Western European enterprise, with honorable contributions from South Africa, both in Afrikaans and in English (J.M Coetzee, Athol Fugard), and a few other places within the Anglo- or Francophone orbit. Trawling through studies of postmodern literature one finds not only an impressive list of names, but also abundant evidence of the truly international character of literary postmodernism. As we might expect, given the patterns of literary traffic between national literatures, American postmodernists like John Barth, Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon, Donald Barthelme, William H. Gass, and others had by the end of the 1970s been translated into a good many languages, with Pynchon's *V.* (1962) already appearing in German in 1968. And with the Cold War's Iron Curtain becoming ever more porous, even the notoriously *petit bourgeois* communist leadership of the (East) German Democratic Republic slowly gave up its warfare against Western cultural decadence: between 1983 and 1990 the East German state publishing house, Volk und Welt, published translations of Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, Richard Brautigan, Susan Sontag and Kurt Vonnegut (although admittedly with afterwords that put their work in its "proper" context).

In the United Kingdom, with the literary world still largely dominated by postwar realism, writers did not embrace the new self-reflexive mode as eagerly as American writers had done (apart from Muriel Spark, who in her very first novel, *The*

*Comforters* [1957], had already introduced a playful metafictional element), but in spite of that John Fowles produced an international postmodern blockbuster with *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). By the mid-1980s, with Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, Alasdair Gray, Peter Ackroyd, Julian Barnes, and others, British postmodernism had also become a major presence on the international literary scene. And in Italy Umberto Eco's *Il nome della Rose* (1980; *The Name of the Rose*, 1983) emerged as probably the best-selling postmodern novel ever.

However, the availability of postmodern English-language authors in other languages does not necessarily say all that much about postmodernism's international character. In a recent book, ominously called *Que reste-t-il de la Culture française?* (2008; What Is Left of French Culture?), Antoine Compagnon and Donald Morrison tell us that of the more than 600 novels published annually in France only a handful are translated into English. All in all, around a dozen translations are published, and more than half of these are new translations of French classics. Translation is largely a one-way street. What really illustrates the truly international, world-literary character of postmodern literature, then, is the impressive number of translations, from a variety of languages, into English. From the early 1960s onwards, postmodern novels by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Marguerite Duras, Georges Perec (France), Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Julio Cortázar and Manuel Puig (Argentina), Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia), Guillermo Cabrera Infante (Cuba), Juan Goytisolo (Spain), Peter Handke and Christoph Ransmayr (Austria), Ulrich Plenzdorf and Peter Chotjewitz (Germany), Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco (Italy), Peter Esterházy (Hungary), Andrej Bitov (Russia), Milorad Pavić and Danilo Kiš (Serbia), Dubravka Ungrešić (Croatia), and a good many others appeared in English. More recently, translations from other than European languages have begun to join the list. Chinese postmodernists such as Mo Yan (*Republic of Wine* [2000]; *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* [2004]) and Han Shaogong (*Dictionary of Maqiao* [2003]) (see Fokkema 2008) have found their way to a Western reading public for which English increasingly serves as a lingua franca, and so have a number of their Japanese counterparts, the most important – and most famous – of whom is surely Murakami Haruki, whose whole oeuvre has been translated into a large number of languages; but Japanese postmodernism also includes Takahashi Genichirō (*Sayonara, Gangsters* [2004]) and Shimada Masahiko (*Dream Messengers* [1994]).

Although all of these writers employ the self-reflexive techniques characteristic of the metafictional postmodernism that I am discussing here, there are substantial differences among the various national inflections. In France, postmodernism partly took shape in reaction to existentialism, but preserved much of its seriousness, whereas in the United States in its earlier stages postmodernism tended to be playful and exuberant (as in Pynchon's *V.* [1962], John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* [1968], Robert Coover's *Pricksongs & Descants* [1969]). In Germany, under the shadow of its then still fairly recent Nazi history, such playfulness and exuberance were rare, apart from which postmodernism was at war with the great German modernists not so much but with the dogmatic Left that had again become a force in West German politics. In China and Japan, postmodernism has mainly taken the form of a marriage of largely imported self-reflexive narrative techniques and traditional story-telling. Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* (2002, trans. 2005) employs a seemingly realistic and

captivating narrative mode to present wholly impossible events that would seem to transport us to the realm of magical realism, but also offers wholly inexplicable cameo appearances of KFC's Colonel Saunders and whiskey's Johnny Walker, both in full regalia, that appear to serve no purpose whatsoever.

Such national or local inflections are even more striking in the case of a branch of the postmodern tree that I have so far not mentioned and that we perhaps should not see as such at all: African postmodernism. Although a play like Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) and novels like Yambo Ouologem's *Le Devoir de violence* (1968; *Bound to Violence* [1971]) and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances* (1968; *The Suns of Independence* [1981]) and *Monnè, outrages et défis* (1990; *Monnew: A Novel* [1998]) would at first sight appear to belong in the postmodern fold, critics familiar with oral African traditions have pointed out that the elements that strike the European reader as postmodern are familiar enough within that tradition and in no way imply the ironical scepticism with regard to all metanarratives that Jean-François Lyotard has identified as fundamental to postmodernism as a *Weltanschauung* and that also pervades metafictional postmodern literature (Zabus 1997, Sellin 1997). There are very good reasons, then, to regard Ouologem, Kourouma and other African writers, who at first sight seem to share certain affinities with postmodern literature, in a postcolonial rather than in a postmodern context. If we see them in the light of postcolonial studies, they have, in spite of the superficial resemblance with self-reflexive postmodernism, a good deal more in common with the thematic postmodernism that I discussed above, the postmodernism of social and cultural liberation, which itself might profitably be viewed from a postcolonial perspective.

Finally, in a discussion of world literature and postmodernism, the academic discourse that almost immediately sprang up around postmodern literature must be mentioned. Postmodern literature has traveled not only in the form of translations. It has also traveled by means of what must be a new form of literary transport: academic criticism. The academic discourse of postmodernism has in a number of cases preceded the actual arrival, through translation, of concrete postmodern texts. In other cases, postmodern discourse already presented a picture of the complete family, to use Wittgenstein's image of family relationships, where the texts that were at that point available in translation had not yet introduced more than a couple of distant cousins.

It is hard to think of another development in literary history that garnered the official seal of recognition so soon after it had emerged. After American literary critics such as Leslie Fiedler and Ihab Hassan had begun to bring the term into circulation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, academic interest in postmodernism spread like wildfire. A few examples will suffice. Already in 1968, Leslie Fiedler provoked a West German audience at the University of Freiburg with his vision of an exuberant, pop-oriented postmodernism. Fiedler's lecture was printed in the Christian weekly *Christ und Welt*, with ten writers and critics offering a response, and immediately became the center of intellectual controversy. Fiedler was soon followed by Ihab Hassan, who in the 1970s and 1980s became a frequent guest at German conferences devoted to postmodernism. In the later 1970s, on the other side of the still fairly solid Iron Curtain, literary academics persuaded the authorities

to allow them to invite American postmodern critics and writers and were instrumental in creating a more general interest in postmodernism. In 1982, in the former Yugoslavia, the Slovenian literary magazine *Sodobnost* initiated a discussion of postmodern literature. The following year the Institute of Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy organized a German–Hungarian symposium that was mainly devoted to postmodern literature. Further East, and a bit later, in 1991 the Moscow Institute of Literature organized a conference entitled "Postmodernism and Us."

In China, the new and (relatively) open policy of the so-called "New Period" (from 1978 onwards) immediately led to the surfacing of an already present underground academic interest in postmodernism. John Barth's "The Literature of Replenishment" of 1980 was immediately translated and published, and in 1985 Fredric Jameson was invited to offer a series of lectures at Peking University (published in Chinese in 1987). Around the same time and across the East China Sea, Japanese literary academics published studies of postmodernism, even prior to the translation of Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition postmoderne* into Japanese (1986). Let me end this brief and very incomplete academic *tour d'horizon* with the remark that all of this (and much more) was duly recorded for future generations in Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema's *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice* (1997), which in itself served as further evidence of the global presence of postmodernism, and the accompanying academic discourse, since the book was commissioned by the International Comparative Literature Association and, while appearing as volume XI in its *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, did not confine itself to those languages, but included discussions of Chinese, Japanese, and Indian postmodernism.

At least by one definition, a text must lead an active life and cross borders in order to achieve the status of world literature. A host of postmodern texts, particularly novels, have succeeded in doing so. Needless to say, not all of these texts have had an equally "effective life", to use Damrosch's term (2003: 4). Inevitably, after the impact of what one might call the first generation of postmodern texts, culminating around the mid-1970s in such major novels as Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and Carlos Fuentes' *Terra Nostra* (1975), the law of diminishing returns kicked in. But even a good many texts belonging to that first generation have by now become sleepers on the world literary scene or have simply disappeared to join those texts that never crossed a border. So soon after postmodernism's heyday, it is impossible to say what its lasting contribution to world literature will be, but there can be little doubt that its major works will keep on fascinating future readers.

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# 22
# WORLD LITERATURE AND POSTCOLONIALISM

*Robert J.C. Young*

The relation of world literature to postcolonialism remains virtually unmarked territory. There has been little direct exchange between these two separately demarcated domains of literary study. Why is this so? The reason must lie in the fact that their respective positions with relation to literature remain largely incompatible and disjunctive. What do they have in common, and what keeps them apart?

The two share a fundamental perspective on literary studies that at first sight ought to put them in dialogue with each other: both seek to move the study of literary texts beyond the confines of the classic boundaries of European literature. In this context, world literature has a much longer history, going back to Goethe's use of the term *Weltliteratur* in 1827, while postcolonialism, and the idea of postcolonial literature, are generally reckoned to have begun as critical concepts with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 (Said 1978). However, this historical difference immediately opens up the distinction between world and postcolonial literatures in another way. Goethe's idea of world literature, conceived in terms of the circulation of excellent works of literature, stemmed in part from his enthusiasm for texts from other cultures, amongst which Sir William Jones's translations of the Persian poet, Hafiz, figured notably. However, it is also the case that Jones's translations, first of Persian and then of Sanskrit literature, form part of a postcolonial story whose overall perspective is founded on the fact that Jones's work was conducted in his role as a judge in the service of the East India Company; his translations from Oriental languages were in part intended to facilitate the exercise of colonial power. Analysis of his writing, it has been argued, cannot be purely "literary" and ignore the context of Jones's work (Niranjana 1992).

In general, concepts of world literature offer themselves as disinterested, even though the varying fortunes of world literature as a literary concept have generally been precipitated by external world-historical events. Apart from the statistical perspective offered by Franco Moretti (Moretti 2000, 2005), in general world literature, whether in its original Goethean formulation or in its early or late twentieth-century reincarnations, is promoted on aesthetic grounds as the best literature, literature of such quality and insight that it transcends its local context to establish itself as

universal, shared by all cultures. As a result, world literature is hard pressed to avoid traditional questions of judgment and taste. The degree to which it relies on such criteria is indicated by the fact that, until very recently, most accounts or selections of world literature remained predominantly European in emphasis (it was a way of bringing classical and modern texts together) with only a relatively minor number of non-European works included. This is not entirely unexpected, given that, however counter-cultural, the idea of world literature coincided with the period of imperialism in which European cultures were set as the universal standard that transcended all non-European others (see Kadir in this volume).

One method that became popular in the nineteenth century to establish literary value was the concept of the classic. Setting aside eccentric views such as those of T.S. Eliot, who believed there was only one classic (Virgil's *Aeneid*) (Eliot 1945), the idea of the classic remains the foundation of attempts to found a literary canon on the idea of literary value (see Kirby in this volume). Though one of several examples in its time, the series of "The World's Classics" published by Oxford University Press from 1906 has been the most long-lived and influential attempt to establish a canon of world literature. However, even today, only a tiny proportion of its titles come from outside Europe. Although the list does include texts from a wider range of non-European languages, only Chinese is mentioned on the website (World's Classics 2010). As with the word "universal," so "world," in the context of literature, has often simply meant European.

David Damrosch has sought to move the idea of world literature beyond this older perspective, introducing two new modes of conceptualization (Damrosch 2003). The first can be compared to J.M. Coetzee's discussion of the classic, where he suggests that the classic achieves its status by being read (or played, in the case of his example, the music of J.S. Bach) through the generations (Coetzee 1993). For world literature, Damrosch suggests a comparable principle of empirically tested value, namely the circulation of literary texts beyond their cultures of origin, generally in translation, though in this case Damrosch argues that there is no guarantee that the text's circulation as a classic of world literature will continue throughout time – with writers (and indeed composers), readers' interest comes and goes. Alongside the classic, and the "masterpiece" or modern classic, Damrosch adds a further category where the selection criterion is social and informational rather than aesthetic: he characterizes this as "a window on the world." Reading an Indian-American novel such as Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (Lahiri 2003) will give the American reader information about Indian culture, from a quasi-anthropological point of view: here the novel's main function is to represent the diversity of literary cultures and to act as a form of cultural translation for Western readers. This may work just so long as the other culture is not represented as too different, which may account for a common preference for the use of diasporic writers who may write in English or other European languages, rather than local ones who write in their own indigenous languages and do not write for Western audiences. So to learn about Afghani or Iranian society, today we read *The Kite Runner* (Hosseini 2003) or *Persepolis* (Satrapi 2003).

Damrosch suggests that these different modalities of world literature can exist side by side. Less easily assimilable is the position of Pascale Casanova in *The World*

*Republic of Letters* (Casanova 2004 [1999]), where she points to the institutional formation of world literature as a field over the last 200 years. Casanova claims a more specific aesthetic for world literature, emphasizing the degree to which cosmopolitan Paris promoted avant-garde modernist writers from around the world, which enabled them to transcend the limitations of their local cultures held back by an adherence to limiting, realist criteria. The Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector, who remained largely untranslated and out of global circulation until she was promoted by Hélène Cixous in Paris, would be one of many possible examples. World literature in this context therefore retains its aesthetic basis, but one firmly set in the debates between modernism and realism, leaving realism relegated to the local, implicitly more primitive outlying national literary sectors. While Casanova's historical account appears in many respects irrefutable, this formation has undoubtedly been replaced or at least supplemented today by a new genre of transnational writing which has never been national, often written by diasporic authors, which is promoted by international publishers for a world market-place. This popular literature is typically global in scope, concerned with both Western and non-Western subject matter, even if generally written in English (Walkowitz 2009). A novel such as Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (Kunzru 2004), concerned with a hero who moves from India to the USA and then escapes to Mexico, is typical of the transnational subject matter of such writers. This can be linked to the growing tendency of some writers, such as J.M. Coetzee or Orhan Pamuk, to write for translation. Here, reinterpreting Walter Benjamin, it might be claimed that it is the translatability of the literary work that allows it to accede to world literature.

Much of the debate within the field of world literature in recent years has thus been over the question of how to define what makes literature world literature. Should it be Goethe's universal cultural heritage, Damrosch's works that circulate beyond their own cultural borders, Casanova's avant-garde world republic of letters, or Walkowitz's new transnational genre for a globalized book industry? World literature in this respect makes up more a heterogeneous field of critical debate than a constituted canon.

A definitional debate of this kind has been more or less absent in the realm of postcolonial literature, even though it might at first sight seem to present the same problems, as a category, as world literature, namely that it includes almost everything. Given that most countries in the world have at some point been colonized, or at least semi-colonized, and that those colonizing countries not recently colonized, such as Great Britain, have nevertheless themselves been transformed in the second half of the twentieth century by immigration ("reverse colonization") from their former colonies, there are few literatures that could not, in some sense, be described as "postcolonial." One important distinction here would be that in this context postcolonial would always refer to relatively recent writing. Britain and India may be, in different ways, "postcolonial," but few would suggest that John Donne or the authors of the *Dharmasutras* are postcolonial. An immediate means of distinguishing world from postcolonial literature, therefore, would be in terms of historicity, and indeed one way in which world literature has sought to define itself has been by emphasizing "classic" historical rather than contemporary writing.

Even with this caveat, the global scope of postcolonial literature remains very substantial. However, it is noticeable that while the term "postcolonial" has been the subject of extensive debate, there has been remarkably little discussion of what defines "postcolonial literature." This may be because the basis of postcolonial literature has never been, in the first instance, aesthetic criteria, but rather, the effect that it seeks to achieve – it is a literature written against something, namely conditions that obtain in the everyday world. We might call this an aesthetic, but it is more obviously located in terms of what Barbara Harlow, following the work of Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani, called "Resistance Literature" (Harlow 1987). Two years later, in *The Empire Writes Back*, which proposed the category of a certain kind of literature called "postcolonial," Ashcroft et al. placed the emphasis not so much on the postcolonial as a historical category, that is, literature coming after colonialism, but rather on literature which resists colonial power (Ashcroft et al. 1989). By this understanding, literature written against colonialism during the historical time of colonial rule may be termed postcolonial, or at least be considered within the framework of postcolonial studies. In this respect, postcolonial literature was defined against the older category of Commonwealth literature, which simply meant writing, in English, from Commonwealth countries. Ashcroft et al. argued that although this was at one level a neutral term that included all writing from those countries, at another level it maintained an implicit cultural and political hierarchy which left Great Britain at the centre and relegated all other literatures written in English to the margins of "real" English literature; only Anglo-American literature had succeeded in establishing itself as a separate category, while Irish or Scottish literature, for their part, were simply assimilated into English literature without trace.

It is in this context that postcolonial literature as a literature of resistance takes on its significance. Many works of postcolonial literature – and of criticism, moreover – involve what Ashcroft et al. term "writing back," a strategy which sometimes goes so far as to rewrite earlier classic texts from the perspective of the colonial characters who figure in their margins, as in Jean Rhys's reworking of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* in her *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Rhys 1966). Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has long been subject to such treatments. Part of the way in which postcolonial literature "resists" has thus been its rewriting of the colonizer's own classics, making them truly worldly. Postcolonial criticism has followed suit with its own reinterpretation of the classics, from Shakespeare to Jane Austen, showing the extent of their involvement in questions of colonialism, slavery, racism, and the like, and the extent to which the colonial framework determines the terms of the domestic drama. Whereas at some level world literature must always be claimed as universal for it to merit its place at the world literary table, postcolonial literature makes no such assertion, and indeed insofar as it involves resistance, will always in some sense be partial, locked into a particular problematic of power. This power structure may be typical, more generally, but the specifics with which the literary text is concerned will always be allied to the particular local and historical instance. The writer is less concerned with aesthetic impact than making a critical intervention, an intervention that is always directed beyond the novel, to the state of the world outside. Postcolonial literature does not simply illustrate the diversity of different cultures around the globe. It is

rather concerned to expose and challenge imbalances of power, and the different forms of injustice that follow from such factors. Postcolonial literature will always seek to go beyond itself to impact upon the world which it represents: partial, metonymic, it will always be engaged with realities beyond itself.

Postcolonial literature always makes a statement about something in the world, often disturbing our current assumptions and perceptions as it does so. It may not necessarily be "realist" in style, but it will always engage with the politics of the real. It is this quality of commitment and involvement that is distinctive, and it is for this reason that, despite the eminence of Salman Rushdie, who uses magic realist techniques derived from Gabriel García Márquez, realism remains the predominant aesthetic of postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literature remains a literature concerned with the world, a world which that literature seeks to change by telling the stories that it shares with its readers. It is always interested, in the same way that Edward Said's *Orientalism* constituted a deliberate intervention (with the additional argument that so-called disinterested scholarship was in fact interested in its own way). For this reason, there is a close relationship between postcolonial theory and literature: while theorists read literary works, it is clear that, just as much as in fine arts and other media, authors and artists read postcolonial theory.

These are the reasons why there are few debates about what makes up postcolonial literature as a canon, because the individual, whether reader or instructor, is free to involve any literary text if he or she can make an argument that that text demonstrates postcolonial concerns. The selection is determined by the individual critic's *Ansatzpunkt* or starting-point, as Erich Auerbach put it (Auerbach 1969: 13–14). There are few courses in "postcolonial literature" or literatures as such. Typically, postcolonial literature is organized according to geographical criteria, thus mediating the distance between national and world literatures through the regional, with its complex interplay of major and minor literatures and languages (Deleuze and Guattari 1985) – or by bringing together texts from a wide range of locations according to certain specific themes such as resistance, marginality, diaspora, queer sexualities, gender, etc. The individual instructor then chooses the texts to relate to the overall preoccupation. As a result, much postcolonial literature is read topically, or at least valued for its treatment of themes, while aesthetic criteria come only at a secondary level.

For the same reason, the authors themselves at times, one suspects, write novels that explore well-known issues of postcolonial theory, particularly when the local literary culture values thematic concerns over aesthetic or "literary" ones. The high institutional status of the social sciences in India, for example, means that many postcolonial literary critics prefer to write versions of social science rather than literary criticism, while similarly many Indian novelists write what might be termed "social science fiction" which embodies and explores the concerns of the established field. There have been few contemporary Indian literary critics, aside from the late Meenakshi Mukherjee, who write a literary criticism concerned with the particular aesthetic resources of a writer's language. The limitation of some postcolonial criticism is thus that the critic often reads his or her material in largely thematic terms. The emphasis on content rather than language or form has meant that postcolonial literatures are easily read in translation, with literary value demonstrated in terms of

the common social or historical concerns of the author and the critic. To that degree, texts rise and fall in popularity faster than in other literary arenas.

Thematics need not, however, simply mean content at a basic level. If world literature is universal, postcolonial literature, though partial, achieves a certain universality through its relation to the ethical. One characteristic that defines postcolonial literature as a literary form is its relation to ethics: in that sense, it could be said to be closer to certain nineteenth-century European models than the avant-garde rebel literature of the twentieth century. Postcolonial literature is characterized by an ethics of humanity, of the humane in its broadest sense (which means that it will also be concerned with the lives of animals), just as much as it is defined by a critical focus which challenges inhumanity in its modes of the abuse of power in whatever particular historical form that might take. The ethical focus leads to an interest in questions of justice, of human rights, of ecology, of religion and secularism, of inequality in power relations, whether colonial, postcolonial, involving gender, class, or caste, the respective roles of dominant and minority languages, or the continuing struggles of colonized and indigenous peoples. This might be simply termed the political, but it is political in its broadest sense, involving the survival of peoples and their cultures.

If these are also questions raised in other areas of the humanities and social sciences, what, it might be asked, can be the contribution of literature? How do postcolonial literature and theory differ from historical, sociological, political, and anthropological accounts of specific historical or cultural moments? One characteristic would be its realist particularity, whereby it positions itself in a recognizable historical narrative, for example the history of British colonialism in West Africa in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 1958). This novel also provides what amounts to a virtual anthropological account of life in a West African village, making a powerful point that just because it was a culture without writing does not mean that it was a culture without strong morality, social rules, or a sense of its own history. Beyond that, the novel combines its analysis of objective and sociological processes with the subjective experience of those involved, notably the main character Okonkwo. It is this combination of the subjective with the objective, the ability to articulate the ways in which larger historical events are felt on the pulses of the people who undergo them, that marks the distinctive mode of postcolonial writing. At the same time, following Frantz Fanon (Fanon 1986), postcolonial literature exposes the violent splitting in situations of subjection between how people feel to themselves, and the ways in which they are treated by society. The most violent form of this discrepancy is the experience of racism or castism. What made it worse in colonial times was that, through education and other forms of cultural subjection, people were made to internalize the degraded figure that they cut in the eyes of their colonizers and to see that as the true form of themselves. Postcolonial writing inhabits these tense, painful borders between psychic and material life, articulating a personal experience of reality and history – but of realities and histories very different from those traditionally celebrated in Western countries.

Within its aesthetics of humanity, the take of postcolonial writers on the realities that they depict will range across many different possibilities, but typically alternate between the tragic and the comic. An emblematic moment here would be 1961, the

year of the publication of two postcolonial classics – Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon 1965 [1961]) and V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* (Naipaul 1961). The first treats the humiliation of colonialism as tragedy, the second as farce. Fanon's famous text, angrily advocating resistance to colonial power, would become the bible of the decolonization movement, a handbook of emancipation, both personal and political, that continues to inspire artists as well as activists today. Naipaul's novel, on the other hand, articulates the very hopelessness of being a colonial subject that Fanon is fighting against and seeks to turn around through recourse to anticolonial violence. Mr Biswas' attempts to realize himself are always failures, gently and at times unbearably mocked by the author. Samuel Smiles's widely read Victorian manual *Self Help: With Illustrations of Character, Conduct and Perseverance* (1859) follows Mr Biswas around like a mocking bad penny. *A House for Mr Biswas* does not protest directly in any way against colonial rule, but it expresses all the frustration and bafflements of defeated desire that form the kernel of the sense of being born into the provincial colony, the narrowness of a life that will only ever be secondary, the half-life of the colonial situation. Much art of an earlier period grapples with this quandary, often reaching out to international modernism as a way of transcending the local and the provincial, the belatedness of colonial culture (as in the case of the Indian writer Mulk Raj Anand, for example). This international modernist strain has long left the postcolonial literary realm, or, arguably, has been translated into the new literary mode of the global literature market. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* exists at the cusp of these two moments.

The conjunction of Fanon and Naipaul's works, two postcolonial classics by authors of very different political persuasions, highlights the degree to which postcolonial literature is often judged in terms of its argument as much as its literary quality – the tension between content and value in postcolonial literature. Naipaul is routinely attacked for espousing unacceptable opinions in his work (Nixon 1992). Should literature simply reflect the dominant social view, or should its content or aesthetic form exist in tension with its own society (Said 2005: 20)? Literature from former colonies written by postcolonial writers does often voice sentiments of resistance to colonial rule, or analyze the deleterious effects of colonial culture upon the society and the individual. While Naipaul does the latter, he certainly does not offer the former. One of the aspects of postcolonial writing that critics find most difficult to deal with is colonial or postcolonial writers who do not articulate perspectives on colonial rule and its culture, or on such matters as caste or gender, that accord with those of contemporary times. These perspectives, however, are not stable in themselves. This has meant that the writers who have been most widely taught, such as Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, or Tayeb Salih, despite their differences in cultural background, express sentiments comparable to each other, a factor that has allowed postcolonial literature to develop as a field. Writers whose work does not accord with contemporary views, such as Henry Derozio in the nineteenth century, or Naipaul in the twentieth, remain problematic, however masterly their writing, since postcolonial literature as a field is never neutral.

It can be asked how far some contemporary writers have achieved pre-eminence as a result of the perspectives they present and how far their strengths depend on more traditional literary qualities. In that sense we might compare world literature to

postcolonial literature in terms of language models: whereas world literature is conceived from a presumption of cultural free speech, in which each culture is free to express itself as it may wish, postcolonial literature is assessed from that of the speech act, directed to an audience, and aiming to communicate with and affect the audience who will receive it. If the effect of the speech act is not welcome, this can be particularly difficult for contemporary readers, and not only with respect to older writers or those writing in previous centuries. This distinction marks exactly the terms of debate around Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses:* should it be accepted on a principle of free speech and free artistic expression, or should it be criticized on the grounds of its deliberately seeking to cause offence?

The questions of speech and the freedom of expression that speech affords are fundamental to postcolonial literature in a different way. While aesthetic value is not a major focus for postcolonial literature, the questions of language and of translation are central, even if they operate unacknowledged beneath the surface. In this respect, we may contrast the situation of world literature, which, though it might acknowledge the uneven relation between literatures and their respective languages, is not always concerned directly with issues of language and translation, or at least not until very recently (see Venuti and Bermann in this volume). Whereas world literature is generally approached in terms of individual writers expressing themselves in their own language, which we may, however, read in translation and which may require the mediating role of the critic, this assumption is never simply a given for the postcolonial writer, who very often exists in a state of anxiety with respect to the language in which he or she writes.

Language anxiety is fundamental to postcolonial writing. It was first articulated directly with respect to the decision as to which language the writer should choose to write in. The alternatives here are usually marked by the names of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. At a certain point in his writing, Ngugi decided that he could no longer write in English, the language of his former colonizers, rather than his own native Gikuyu. By his using English, the world that he was trying to portray, its very epistemological foundation, was already translated in certain respects into the cultural perspectives of the very colonial culture that he was trying to resist (Ngugi 1981). By contrast, Achebe argued that English, though the colonizer's language, was effectively now also an African language and one that had become inflected in its new milieu (Achebe 1988). The writer could use English, but should continually subvert it by inflecting it towards local idiom. In making this argument, Achebe was following the lead of James Joyce, who as an Irishman writing at the beginning of the twentieth century was confronted with the same issue: should he write in Irish or English? His decision was to write in an elaborate Irish-English embellished and subverted so that it certainly cannot be read as English in any straightforward way. Salman Rushdie could be said to have followed more directly the Joycean path. A different choice would be that of Samuel Beckett, namely the decision to get away from the colonial language by writing in a third, and for Beckett neutral, language, in his case French.

In more recent years, as English has become a global language, it has also to some extent become an unmarked medium by means of which writers can mediate their own cultures, an option that is particularly attractive for writers whose native

tongues are "small languages," or for those such as Dalit writers, who object to writing in the Hindi which is the dominant language of their caste oppressors. The question of language choice will always have to be made, but whatever language they choose, many postcolonial writers nevertheless retain a certain anxiety in their relation to the particular language in which they write, the more so if this is a major European language such as English or French. This is one reason, for example, which makes the Algerian-French philosopher Jacques Derrida in certain respects a "postcolonial writer," as he shared a marked sense of being estranged within his own language (Derrida 1998). If world literature consists of literary works that successfully circulate internationally beyond the confines of their own borders by typically wearing their own original cultural context "rather lightly" (Damrosch 2003: 139), any work of postcolonial literature will always be riven by its own context, since it will be the literature of a culture forcibly internationalized by the impact of foreign cultures and languages from beyond, which were imposed without choice.

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# 23
# WORLD LITERATURE AND GLOBALIZATION

*Eric Hayot*

## Method

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, we can locate world literature as a concept – and as the subject of academic discourse, book titles, conferences, and so on – in the eye of two seemingly incompatible modes of appearance: as a feeling or attitude provoked by intensive close reading of individual texts, tuned to the frequency of their transnational effects and imaginations; or as a discourse and field of social formation, generated by the circulation and development of literary genres, micro-genres, and representational or stylistic forms across the boundaries of nation, culture, and time. At stake in that difference is the meaning of world literature today: its uses, and its very being.

That one of these approaches borrows some of its habits from the social sciences – so often a neutral description of consumption, production, and exchange at the macro-comparative level – means that world literature cannot be seen as simply the linked literary counterpart to globalization studies. That is: there is no easy way to think world literature *and* globalization studies, partly because the latter has so strongly been associated with social-scientific and positivist approaches to the study of the economic and political transformations that have occurred under its name. This much is suggested by the vast resistance among literary humanists to social-scientific or pseudo-scientific approaches to literary study, a resistance made up of equal parts attraction and repulsion, as the prestige of systems theory and world-systems analysis in contemporary theoretical work suggests (see Apter 2009). The emphasis on detail and singularity undergirding the standard methodologies of contemporary literary criticism – the "heuristic of close reading and attention to poetic figuralism" that governs it (Apter 2009: 44) – stems in part from a theory of literature and, more generally, of the aesthetic that has, since Kant, imagined the literary as a site of imaginative escape and play, a form of indifference or even resistance to the market and to exchange. Such resistance operates best at close scales of analysis, where the object's potential distance (and liberation) from history of all types is assured by readings that discover in it the significant excesses of signification that constitute the work's originality, its transformations of the ideological and historical substrates surrounding it.

This impasse, in which world literature is simultaneously caught up with the transnational, translational possibilities of globalization, and conceived as a form of resistance to it, means that though we may not want to think of world literature *and* globalization in any simple way, we may not be able to conceive of world literature *without* globalization, either. This is so because, on the one hand, the increased awareness of the international exchange of people and ideas provoked by globalization studies (and the general popularity of the idea of globalization outside the academy) has accompanied a rise to prominence of literary critical paradigms that emphasize similarly transnational features of literary history; hence cosmopolitanism, post-colonial and diaspora studies, and world literature. From this perspective globalization and world literature go hand in hand: they are both part of a larger cultural awareness of the processes of transculturation, inspiration, exchange, and engagement that govern our cultural, political, and economic lives. The attention they draw to these forms of circulation and exchange allows us to break out of our national, monolingual, or even purely inter-national models for the study of everyday life and of the history of literature – producing a new emphasis on local–global interactions, contact zones, regional formations, and multilingual literatures, among other things.

On the other hand, certain features of globalization studies – its frequent triumphalism; its common US-centrism; its critical methods – have placed it in significant opposition to the political beliefs and intellectual habits of scholars of literature. Few contrasts are starker than that between the ways political scientists and economists, on the one hand, and literary critics, on the other, talk about globalization. For the former, the process tends to be conceived of as either neutral or positive: globalization is about the increasing of global wealth, the lifting of people and nations out of poverty through new opportunities to work and to produce globally valuable goods, and the spread of such liberal values as feminism, democracy, or human rights. For the latter, "globalization" is almost inevitably negative: it represents the loss or destruction of cultural difference, the erasure of lifeways or cultural beliefs incompatible with the maximization of profit, a totalizing presentism, and the final march of a particularly American version of capitalism with no love for the "welfare state," unions, or non-productive leisure. For these reasons, in the contemporary university, globalization studies operates in two distinct and to some extent incompatible modes: the largely positive one, carried out for the most part in the social sciences; and the largely negative one, carried out in the humanities. By this institutional logic a difference in the *value* of globalization is translated into a difference in the *method* with which the subject is approached. The terms "quantitative" (social science) and "qualitative" (humanities) may serve as a convenient shorthand for this methodological distinction.

This brief sketch of the academic status of the relation between literature and globalization permits, among other things, a clearer understanding of the challenge posed to world literature by the near-simultaneous publication, around the turn of the millennium, of Pascale Casanova's *La République mondiale des lettres* (1999) and Franco Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" (2000). A decade and more beyond their appearance, it is now possible to recognize in them an important theoretical challenge to existing paradigms of literary study and indeed to the concept of world literature – a concept we may well give both authors credit for resurrecting, if only, as their critics have argued, to put it to a second and more definitive death

(see Buescu and Thomsen in this volume; see also Arac 2002; Prendergast 2005; Serlen 2010; and Spivak 2003). The nature of the challenge posed by Moretti and Casanova (unfairly lumped together, perhaps; so the accidents of publishing history!) has to do with their use and promulgation of dramatic shifts of scale in the analysis of literature (from close to far), from their emphasis on literary market-places and their patterns of production, consumption, and circulation, and on their references to systems-oriented methods that seem, by virtue of their focus on power, pattern, and developmental logics borrowed from the quantitative fields, to be structuralist, inhuman, and cold.

Explaining his interest in the graphs, maps, and trees that appear in his 2005 book of that name, Moretti writes that he is attempting to describe "objects that have no equivalent within lived experience" (Moretti 2006: 82). No equivalent within lived experience, because the scale at which such objects emerge no longer puts us in touch with the "body" of literature. Because, in the telescopic view, what emerge are the structural forms of literary history, the causal explanations appropriate to "the 'nomothetic' attempt to discover general laws," rather than the far more intimate and vulnerable claims that emerge from "the 'idiographic' desire to account for the specificity of individual cases" (Moretti 2006: 82). In "Conjectures" Moretti (2005) had called this method "distant reading." Ten years later it is not clear if the method is "reading" at all – whether in fact what develops in these new optics is a history of literature that does not include the experiences of reading or writing it, or that reframes those experiences as epiphenomena of structures whose logic owes nothing to the human sites of its emergence or its experience. For both Moretti and Casanova, "world literature" appears – becomes possible – as the subject of a mode of analysis that grasps it as the effect of patterns of development and change whose logic exceeds that of the individual work, of influence, or of the linguistic opacity of the sentence. Moretti: "world literature is not an object, it's a problem, and a problem that asks for a new critical method" (2005: 55). The "world" appears, for both scholars, only from a perspective whose distance from its object permits a sense of its totality as a system of meaning; it is not, and cannot be, a feature of the intensive reading of a single work, no matter how representative that work appears to be.

The force of this critique of the traditional models of close reading has prompted any number of critics to object to the approaches taken, and indeed to extend the debate over these new methods to questions about the nature of the emergence of literary truth. This is so especially because the epistemological presumption of close reading has been, as Wai Chee Dimock put it in a response to Moretti, that the "loss of literary detail is almost always unwarranted," and thus that the truth of literature lies in the ungeneralizable play of the singular literary gesture (Dimock 2006: 90). The argument for close reading, which emphasizes the irreducible particularity of the literary text, thus assumes, or asserts, that close reading as a method responds to the very nature of literature. To abandon close reading is, in essence, to abandon literature; what you describe at other scales of analysis, quantitative or structural, may be a literature-like object, but it is not, finally, literature, which, in crucial ways, is made up of particular gestures that constitute a kind of signifying remainder to any explanation that does not include them, and which only appear at the closest of scales of analysis.

This disagreement illustrates an important aspect of the situation of world literature and globalization studies today. "World literature" (as term, field, concept, or hope) is not only, as this *Companion* makes clear, defined by an ambition to overcome forms of geographic, linguistic, or temporal division that have prevented us from understanding the history of literature as a mode of cultural impression and expression. It is also shaped by a contest over the literary-critical method appropriate to that ambition. The interventions made by Moretti and Casanova raised the term "world literature" to a new prominence by, surprisingly, pairing it with forms of reading and argument closely associated with quantitative globalization studies. The reaction to their work across the discipline of literary study, and especially in comparative literature, can be seen as a retrenchment of an older model of literary study as well as an attempt to come up with new, positive theories of world literature that would permit, if not a wholesale rejection of a globalization-studies approach, then at least a significant refraction of it. This is how one can understand, for instance, one of the major conclusions of David Damrosch's *What is World Literature?*, in which Damrosch – though not explicitly referring to Moretti – argues that world literature need not be approached through the reading analysis of large numbers of texts, or of large numbers of units operating either "above" or "below" the textual scale (Moretti has proposed just this, and pursued it, in any number of essays). "World literature is not an immense body of material that must somehow, impossibly, be mastered," Damrosch writes. "It is a mode of reading that can be experienced *intensively* with a few works just as effectively as it can be explored *extensively* with a large number" (2003: 299). Despite the "just as effectively," Damrosch's own practice in *What is World Literature?* and elsewhere confirms his preference for Auerbachian intensity over exospheric extension, a preference which we must understand as articulated in opposition to the globalization-studies-influenced paradigms of Moretti and Casanova.

What we witness in the encounter between close and distant reading, intensive and extensive analysis, qualitative and quantitative methods, idiographic approaches and nomothetic ones, may be assigned to two paradigms of knowledge in the traditional liberal arts, which Brian Lennon has called the anarchist and the statist modes, the former devoted to opening systems, the latter to consolidating them, mapping them, and making them available for action (Lennon 2010: 40). Whether or not our challenge involves choosing between these modes – and it well may – it seems crucial to recognize that the current situation of world literature and globalization studies represents both a typical consolidation of those modes at their impasse, *as well as* an opportunity to recognize in the qualities of this particular impasse (and this particular moment) the possibility of understanding both literature and globalization in new and as-yet-unimagined ways. This is at least one of the meanings, and values, of the concept of "world literature" today.

## Object

Is there a way to think of globalization and world literature coevally, as and through their impasse? Thinking world literature in an age of globalization, as the recent report on the state of comparative literature as a discipline nearly had it (see Saussy

2006), seems easy enough to do. The latter determines the age; the former, out of joint, under threat, is the devalued and buffeted subject of its era (a situation for which the unequal distribution of recent cuts in public funding to US and European universities, which have fallen heavily if not entirely on the humanities, functions as ready evidence). The trick would be to think globalization as the function of an age of world literature.

This challenge matters in a limited sphere of social action. I am speaking after all of literary scholarship, not the literature itself, which may well turn out to be fine. There has never been a human society without some form of recorded imagination; it is unlikely that there will be one. But "world literature" is an artifact of the act of literary scholarship, itself very much under threat, financially and ideologically, in the contemporary university. There will be literature in the world without literature departments, but there might not be "world literature"; the question here as elsewhere is whether such a loss would be better for human societies, or worse, and how, if worse, we might try to keep that loss from happening.

Beyond pointing to the intrinsic utility, from the point of view of both knowledge and pleasure, of any number of works written by literary scholars, or the effects of those works on the lives of millions of students worldwide, it may be useful – if the task is to think globalization in the age of world literature – to begin with some simple statements about the nature of those two categories.

We can begin by observing that both "world" and "globalization" are two of the master-terms of the geographic and historical imaginaries governing the modern period; for the last six or seven decades they have been especially important to concepts of government, social life, economic development, human culture, ecology, technology, and so on. This is so, even though the two words mean very different things. The world: a geographic unity, an organic whole, a frame for cosmopolitanism. We "save" the world; we "feed" it; subject it to regimes of care and imagination. The world is a ground; a source of life; a field of activity and play; "that in which there is room for everyone … a genuine place, one in which things can genuinely *take place*" (Nancy 2007: 42). Whereas, globalization: a transformation, a form of historicity, a juggernaut, a force, a process, an asymptote. We do not act on globalization; it acts on us. Its transformations are paradoxes: more communication, but less community; more difference, but less diversity; more speed, but less time. Globalization creates, and destroys, the possibility of the future.

We may at first register the difference between these terms as an effect of their relation to space and time; the world is, after all, generally understood as a place, though a very strange kind of place, while globalization is a process (if a very strange kind of process). This alone explains much of the difference between their uses. But we can easily enough see that globalization, as a process, implies a certain kind of place, namely the "globe," and that insofar as it names a process, it names a process that *spatializes*, a process in which spaces not formerly "globalized" become integrated into a totality governed by the logic of connection and network (see Castells 2006). Globalization makes things globe-al; it brings them in contact with the globe, which it conceives as a field of activity and exchange. Like a map of telephone lines or neural connections, the "globe" of globalization is defined by the activities it makes possible, an emptiness traced out by the patterns playing out on its

surface – a place defined largely by its arrangement of space, not place, what the anthropologist Marc Augé has called "non-places" (on space and place, see also Tuan 2001). Hence Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "The globe is only on our computers. No one lives there." The world, by contrast, is three-dimensional, deep, and warm; we inhabit it, as Spivak says of the planet, "on loan" (Spivak 2003: 73).

It is easier to imagine the spatial boundary of globalization – to see "globe" in it, to make statements about the nature and shape of the space it imagines – than it is to imagine the processual ground of world. We do not, in English, use "world" as a verb (but see Kadir 2004). If worlding named a process, however, it would be a process of orientation or calibration; to world (a person, or a place) would be to locate it "as is" in relation to the whole, to think the whole as that which includes "on loan." Worlding is gestural; it is an attitude, by which one adjusts oneself, symmetrically, to one's inclusion in a whole that does not belong to one. Worlding creates worlds because it bespeaks the part's relation to the whole, but also because in that speaking it imagines (or recreates) the whole that opens to the part. The whole neither precedes the part, nor succeeds it. The world – imagined by Heidegger as the precedent to the modern world *view* or world *picture* in his 1938 essay – is never conceived from above or outside; it is the self-producing enclosure of an inside included in the enclosing.

To pair globalization and world literature therefore is to pair two different spatial and relational conceptions of the object of analysis, as well as two different arrangements of historical time (time overcome, as process and transformation; time expanded, as inhabitation and enclosure). The choice between them, if choice there be, is partly an artifact of the English language; in French *mondialisation*, in contrast to *globalization*, names a world-oriented (and more social) process; in Chinese the most common translation of globalization, *quanqiuhua* 全球化, splits the tonal difference. This is not to suggest that the problem of our objects might be resolved simply by switching languages, but rather to note that the opposition between these two terms in English presents us with a starker contrast than we might find elsewhere. The clarifying advantages of that starkness (offset, surely, by their own particular obscurities) suggest once again that the *and* linking world literature and globalization studies more closely resembles the *and* connecting the Hatfields to the McCoys (warring Appalachian clans in US folk mythology) than the one that joins Romeo to Juliet, or Diana Ross to the Supremes.

The phenomenological analysis of the presumed objects of world literature and globalization studies (the world and the globe, respectively) thus returns us to the knot with which we ended the section on method, with the advantage of a more complex sense of the nature of the impasse that unites and divides the two fields of inquiry. What can world literature have to say to globalization studies, if saying anything means adopting the senses of process and spatialization that are at the heart of the latter's conception of its object? And what can globalization studies say to (or, more ambitiously, for) literature, given that the forms of mutuality and time insisted on by the latter mean a restriction of the former's most productive heuristic tools? One measure of the strange instability of this impasse can be found in Damrosch's call, in a recent issue of *New Literary History*, for "*global* world literature" studies, which would target the "narrowly bounded nationalism and a boundless, breathless

globalism" that characterize contemporary thinking about literary history (Damrosch 2008: 483, 490). I find it startling that the world in world literature needs supplementing with the word "global." The addition registers, if it does not accede to, the insolidity, partiality, and even ghostliness of "world" in these contexts, the nearness of the loss of "world" as an alternative to "globe" and of "world literature" as a field of study that can resist the statist and masterful impulses of globalization.

One possible sortie: to consider the situation of world literature and globalization studies not as an antagonism but as deriving from a larger cultural formation, to which we could then return both fields, recognizing them to be competing divisions of a single realm of understanding. The name of that cultural formation would be something like *cosmology*. This latter, now regarded as the sole province of astronomers, was nonetheless for most of Western history through the late eighteenth century the realm through which the globe and the world were most strenuously debated and imagined. Rekindling a sense of cosmology as precisely that sort of world-imagining force (and remember that, under the earlier name of cosmography, the field addressed not only questions of physics and physical creation but of geography, translation, politics, and history), can we not recognize that globalization, rather than a particular kind of age-creating process, is primarily a (very powerful) way of imagining and describing the cosmos, the unity of space and time that constitutes the ground and nature for human life? And can we not say in turn that "world," a term explicitly recognized as a warmer alternative to globalization's "globe," is likewise a cosmological imperative, a statement about the nature of the life-ground, the ethics of human being, and the meaning of historical growth and development?

Among the advantages of such a recognition would be the possibility of noticing that the secular-scientific resolution of the basic question of the universe's origins (in physics and astronomy, that is) has not, for all its power, resolved any of the other cosmological or cosmographical questions that have troubled the human sciences since the earliest inventions of thinking and writing. Though globalization may pretend, as it often does, to describe just the same sort of neutral, scientific process as the Hubble constant or the Big Bang (a name with its own signifying excess!), we may recognize it today as very much in line with the history of cosmological thought going back well before the dawn of modernity, as an attempt to describe historical, geographic, and political processes as effects of the nature of the lived world – one of whose forms may well be the work of art itself (see Nancy 2007: 42). In this sense we are all inheritors of the claims made in the *Cosmographia* of Bernardus Silvestris (ca. 1147) – "many things spring from the earth, but without the stimulus of a principle of growth neither tree nor shoot nor anything else would thrive" (Silvestris 1990: 88) – which was itself, of course, an inheritor of a cosmological tradition dating back to Plato's *Timaeus*, and beyond.

In its cosmological ambitions, however, globalization is far from unique, for, after all, the other major site for the cosmological imagination in human life long has been the field of the aesthetic, especially that of narrative in all fields. It is easy enough to think of such modern genres as the encyclopedia, the atlas, or the dictionary as carrying over the world-spanning or totalizing ambitions of such earlier forms as the chronicle, the compendium, or the Chinese *zhuan* 转; their metaphorical equivalents

in imaginative literature – Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars;* Perec's *La Vie mode d'emploi*; Dong Qizhang's *The Atlas: The Archeology of an Imaginary City* – may allow us to conclude, as Andrea Bachner does in an essay on Dong's work, that "the world of world literature is 'global' – and has always been 'global,' even before the advent of the term 'globalization' in the 1960s," since all literature participates, as does the discourse of globalization, in the process, and contest, of imaging the world we live in (Bachner 2010: 342). From such a perspective we gain a vision of all literature as "world" literature, as worlding literature, literature in conversation with globalization (see Kadir and Puchner in this volume). Having taken over the old tasks of cosmology, world literature continues resolutely in both content and form to think the implications of totality for both everyday and historical life alike. In so recognizing world literature, we may also recognize (and thus rethink) globalization as one particularly powerful invented instance of that cosmological impulse, and thus grant it the freedom of a less theological, more imaginative ground for the study of the present and the concept of "development" on which it so strenuously relies.

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# 24
# WORLD LITERATURE AND DIASPORA STUDIES

*Jason Frydman*

The idea of world literature emerged contemporaneously with innovative modes of conceptualizing the dynamics of world history, from the idealism of Hegel to the materialism of Marx and Engels. This affiliation has endured as the intellectual descendant of the nineteenth-century world-historical imagination, "world-systems theory, has gained traction in literary studies" (Apter 2009: 45). The large-scale displacements and migrations produced by and productive of the modern world economic system have deeply imprinted global literary production: the African, Chinese, and Indian diasporas fueled by colonial political economy, for example, have attained an expansive and overlapping textual presence throughout Europe and Asia, Africa and the Americas. Both bearing witness to dispersal and fashioning its literary implications, ancient and modern diasporic formations cut across geopolitical as well as aesthetic categories. If in many ways it appears, though, that diasporic writing manifests the border-crossing promise foundational to the world literature idea, it just as reliably forges a counter-discourse challenging the temporal and spatial trajectories operative in Eurocentric theorizations of world literature and its history.

In one of the earliest reflections on the modern circulation of world literature, Goethe (see Pizer in this volume) took the French interest in his play *Torquato Tasso* as indicative of a new moment in global letters, offering "a broader view of international and human relations" (Goethe 1973: 5). He tied this moment to the exchange of goods and ideas made possible by post-Napoleonic economic development. As Fritz Strich and others have noted, the economic scenario underwrote Goethe's proclamation that "National literature means little now, the age of world literature has begun; and everyone should further its course" (Strich 1949: 5; Goethe 1973: 6). Goethe participated in what he imagined to be, in the words of Vilashini Cooppan, "a conversation conducted between nations through their most representative and greatest works of literature, a vision that at once overflows national boundaries and confirms them" (Cooppan 2001: 24). This conversation leads from a collection of national masterpieces, embodying what Goethe calls "the true inner soul of a people" (Goethe 1973: 5) to world literature, what various scholars have referred to

as "a dream of works yet to be written" (Cooppan 2001: 17) and "a literature to come" (Lawall 1994: 13). In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels echoed Goethe and extended this forward-looking view when they wrote: "National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature" (Marx and Engels 1978: 476). A similar teleology operates in the works of the contemporary theorist of world literature Pascale Casanova. In her elegant study *The World Republic of Letters* she traces the gradual emergence of a world system of literary value with New York, London, and Paris as centers, and writers from the margins who, despite the operation of certain feedback loops, overwhelmingly accumulate literary capital by way of said centers.

In these understandings, international circulation and translation become hallmarks of the modern literary era, catalysts for a world literature made possible by an economic system under European dominance. Diasporic perspectives, however, call into question the nation-based, proleptic emphasis of world literature, and the modernity of the world economic system that underpins it. Rather than a literary history comprised of national masterpieces that will be surpassed by transnational expressions, diasporic writers conjure a literary past marked precisely by the circulation, translation, and revision which Goethe identifies as a hallmark of the contemporary era of world literature. For writers of the African diaspora, an evocation of the world literary past, furthermore, retroactively asserts a place for Africa and Africans excluded by the narrative of a Eurocentric historiography from meaningful contributions to the world's cultural heritage. One way this literary past is evoked is through allusions to lines and spaces of narrative exchange whose archives, often transmitted orally, may or may not have survived. Thus, throughout her literary and ethnographic work, Zora Neale Hurston will connect African diasporic folklore about Moses back to Moses' place in the narrative pathways of the religious and popular imagination of Africa and the Middle East.

Another way writers of the African diaspora conjure a deep history of world literature is through intertextuality with multinational compendia including the *Panchatantra*, *Kalila wa Dimna*, *Aesop's Fables*, and the Anancy tales of West Africa. With a chorus of frogs emitting "Greek-croak! Greek-croak!" (Walcott 1971: 85), Derek Walcott's "folk" drama *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* conjoins the African-derived Caribbean krik-krak story-telling tradition to the ancient Greek comedies of Aristophanes, thereby evoking a circum-Mediterranean exchange of animal tales linking together the story-telling worlds of ancient Africa, Europe, and Asia, and, eventually, the American New World, as Walcott's own work illustrates. Unstable collections of animal tales, like reconstructed transmissions of Moses stories, waver between orality and textuality, reading and performance, local and cosmopolitan scenes. Out of this wavering, the writers under consideration shape a poetics of the African diaspora and a revisionist sense of world literature.

The works of two Jewish writers, the Argentine Juan Gelman and the Iraqi-born Israeli Shimon Ballas, also embody at the formal level the overdetermined genealogies – the irresolvably entangled sources – of the literary past, in which diasporic literary, linguistic, and identitarian formations consistently disrupt and supplement nation-based discourses. In his 1994 poetry volume *Dibaxu*, Gelman writes in *sefardí*, one of

many names for Ladino, the language of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. The roots of Ladino not only reach back to translations of scripture into a medieval Spanish vocabulary with Hebrew syntax, but also incorporate the unstable regional varieties of the Latin-derived Iberian vernaculars. Ladino's diversity intensified as communities of Sephardic Jews settled throughout North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. Gelman, an activist writer exiled from Argentina by the military dictatorship that assumed power in 1976, explicitly embraces *sefardí* as an act of racial–ethnic border crossing (his family's origins being Ashkenazi and Yiddish-speaking) and a rejection of dictatorial nationalist monoglossia (Gelman 1994: 7; Balbuena 2009: 295). *Dibaxu*, with its companion volumes *Com/posiciones* and *Citas y comentarios*, uses a diasporic language in order to bear witness to the overdetermined origins of Castilian language and poetry, and to displace the illusory certainties of racial, ethnic, and national belonging.

Shimon Ballas executes a similar project in his Hebrew-language novels from *The Transit Camp* to *The Outcast*. Mourning his exile from storied Baghdadi and Arabic literary culture, and responsive to the anti-*Mizrahi* (eastern Jewish) discrimination and anti-Arab racism of Israeli society, Ballas' writing "brings Hebrew closer and closer to Arabic," a project he connects to learning the language from "the sources, the Bible and the Mishnah" (Alcalay n.d.). The resonances between Hebrew and Arabic composition and sensibilities were an assumed starting-point for centuries of Jewish poets, writers, and rabbinic scholars in their Arabic-speaking homelands (Anidjar 2008: 84–101). Ballas decries how such resonances have been excised from a Modern Hebrew designed to serve the Eurocentric, ethnic nationalism of the Zionist project of "return" (Alcalay n.d.). Thus, rather than show Modern Hebrew serving as a language of homecoming, Ballas' texts enact an exile *into* Modern Hebrew that marks the ironies and tragedies attendant upon the upheavals in Israel–Palestine since 1948.

Notably, Ballas' intervention in this linguistic drama struggles against illegibility in translation. The histories of diaspora violently create such linguistic dramas while also testing the capacity of translation to mediate them across the internal fractures of diasporic identities. Francophone Algerian literature emerged as a consequence of the brutal repression of Arabic literacy since that nation's incorporation into *la plus grande France* following a ten-year "pacification" campaign from 1830–40. With strong anti-colonial impulses, writers such as Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar trenchantly, beautifully deformed and Arabized French language and syntax in works such as *Nedjma* and *L'Amour, la fantasia*, and their work affected Francophone writers from West Africa to the Caribbean. After Algeria achieved independence in 1961–62, a massive Arabization campaign worked to bring literacy and literature back into the Arabic fold. Published after her own diasporic sojourn in France, Ahlām Mustaghānamī's best-selling Arabic novel, *Dhākirat al-jasad* (*Memory of the Flesh*), has been read as one of the fruits of that campaign. Formally and thematically, as Elizabeth Holt has made clear, the novel turns on the linguistic drama between French and Arabic, intertextually inserting itself into the modern Arabic canon as an assertion of Algerian literary-linguistic independence. Yet the French translation renders Mustaghānamī's intervention into this drama illegible, obscuring for readers of French that this novel was even written in Arabic. Even more

troublesome, this illegibility for French readers of Algerian descent poignantly highlights the diasporic ruptures of Algerian national identity in the aftermath of empire.

Literary and historical wakefulness to the diasporic itineraries of people, texts, and languages attune the field of world literature to precisely such slippages. The multiplicity of Jewish and Algerian diasporic experience finds a counterpart in the literature of the Indian diaspora, especially in its influential Anglophone trajectories in Britain, Canada, the Caribbean, and the United States. Trinidad-born, Canada-based writer Shani Mootoo's short story "Out on Main Street" limns a paradigmatic series of misrecognitions. Confusion over the proper names for sweets marks the chasm between the Trinidadian narrator, whose Indian culture has been extensively creolized after more than a century in the Caribbean, and her male servers, recent South Asian immigrants. As the servers begin to make advances upon their female clientele, a nascent pan-diasporic feminist identification promises to link the protagonist and her friend to a group of Indian-via-India women at another table. However, as a lesbian couple enters the sweet shop and outs the narrator and her friend to the table of women, the feminist overture retreats and the Indians-from-India, male and female, reconsolidate. Finally, a drunken pair of Anglo-Canadian men arrive, and their clumsiness in the face of racial and gender difference prompts a universal sense of community in everyone else, overriding each of the previous contests. In "Out on Main Street," as an Indian diaspora gets relayed into queer and Caribbean diasporas, identitarian conjunctures and disjunctures multiply. Indo-Trinidadian Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Indian-born Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* take up precisely such multiplications as they play out in London. While ostensibly explorations of immigrant and minority cultures in a specific national context, the diverse "roots and routes" (Clifford 1994) of the diasporic characters quickly "world" these texts, pushing the readers outward to the disjunctures and conjunctures of colonial, religious, and racial–ethnic subjectivities.

For a closer look at an exemplary diasporic figure, in the following pages I will consider the novels of the Francophone, Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé, who has emerged as a seminal author of African diaspora literature and criticism. Her broadly intertextual strategies, weaving together multiple global diasporas and narrative cartographies, paradigmatically bring into focus the slippages and blockages, the circulations and overdeterminations, that mark the terrain of world literature. Her novels *Segu* and *Windward Heights* allow particular insight into the textual mechanics that frequently unfold out of diasporic formations. Accessing long-lived dynamics of the world economic system, these revisionist texts highlight transnational narrative histories that complicate Eurocentric hierarchies of value and originality.

Condé's personal history parallels the models of transnational circulation correlated here with diasporic perspectives on world literature. She left Guadeloupe for Paris in 1953 to continue her studies, first at the Lycée Fénélon and then at the Sorbonne. She remained in Paris until 1959, when she moved with her first husband to his native Guinea. Afterwards, she lived in Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Mali. She later resided in the United States and returned to Guadeloupe in 1986, since that time spending part of the year teaching at American universities and traveling extensively. Her years in West Africa provide the setting for her early

novels *Hérémakhonon* (1972), *A Season in Rihata* (1981), and the two volumes of *Segu* (1984, 1985).

*Segu* recounts the decline of the Bambara kingdom in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in what is now Mali. These two volumes were bestsellers in France and are frequently taught in US college courses. *Segu* follows the progeny of Dousika Traoré through the turmoil of religious wars, encroaching European colonialism, the slave trade, and the countless smaller events that shape the lives of its characters. The descendants of Dousika get scattered throughout North and West Africa, England, Brazil, and Jamaica. Some remain in or return to Segu, the capital city of the Bambara kingdom; many do not. The story of the Bambara kingdom, though, does not simply paint the decline of a static ancestral homeland suddenly shaken out of its equilibrium. If *Segu* offers a partial, metonymic genealogy of modern Africa and the African diaspora, it does so without leveraging what Edouard Glissant calls "a return to the dream of origin" (Glissant 1997: 56).

*Segu* does not present the journey back in time as a return to an organic wholeness. We encounter Bambara history *in medias res*. When the book opens, the Scottish explorer Mungo Park waits on the other bank of the Niger/Joliba River, minarets rise from within the walls of polytheistic Segu, and Quranic verses decorate the body of the Mansa, the ruler of Segu. Demystifying Africa as a mythical place of origin outside of history, Condé's portrait foregrounds the instability and diversity of Segu, a result of its place in global networks of economic and intellectual exchange. Siga, a son of Dousika Traoré, is a narrative cipher of Segu's involvement in these overlapping networks of language, economy, and culture. Having moved from Segu to Timbuktu and then to Morocco, he participates in an economic system reaching from sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean shores of North Africa all the way to the Levant:

> Abdallah had recently put him in charge of his dealing in salt. Twice a month he went to Teghaza or Taoudenni with a caravan to be laden with bars of salt, seeing to it that they were properly bound together so that they didn't suffer damage in transit. At those times he ruled over a whole company of slaves, who carried the bars to and fro and marked them with black lines or diamonds to indicate to whom they belonged. Then he brought the bars back to Timbuktu and sold them to merchants from Morocco, or even from the Middle East and North Africa. It was hard work, but he liked it. As he supervised the slaves and bargained with the merchants he had a feeling of usefulness, if not of power. He was part of a great system, a grand network of exchanges and communications that extended across the universe.
>
> (Condé 1996: 120, translation modified)

Siga's role in the salt trade echoes his intertextual role in *Segu*, suggested by the doubly significant statement: "He was part of a … grand network of exchanges *and communications* that extended across the universe." The text emphasizes that not only commodities are being exchanged; Siga's plot-line dramatizes processes of world literary communication that recast the narrative link between Africa and Europe. Siga leaves his brother Tiekoro in Timbuktu and moves to Fez, where he works in the

bazaar shop of Abdallah, a cousin of the Timbuktu merchant he worked for previously. Fatima, the daughter of a wealthy and immensely powerful woman who prepares high-born brides for their nuptials, falls in love with him, and he with her. Under the irresistible pressure of Fatima's mother, though, Siga ends up involved in a sexual affair with both mother and daughter, dangerous liaisons that, were either to learn of the other, could jeopardize his life. In the midst of apprehending this danger, "an old man sat down beside him, dressed poorly in an old burnous and a cap without earflaps." A dialogue ensues, and the old man grabs Siga and says:

> "Run away! That's the only thing you can do!"
> Siga sat down again.
> "But what about Fatima?"
> "Take her with you. Abduct her. Put the Sahara between you and the mother … "
> He realized it was an ancestor in disguise who had come to show him what he should do, and a great calm swept over him.
>
> (Condé 1996: 190–91)

As advised by his ancestor, Siga plots with his friends to abduct Fatima and flee by boat to the other side of the Sahara.

In a revealing if somewhat deceptive interview, Condé claims to have drawn from the nineteenth-century French novel such narrative elements as these "coincidences, sensational developments, dramatic turns of events, and unexpected encounters" (Pfaff 1996: 49). At the same time, however, another source should come to mind, what with the bazaars, the merchants, the lurid escapades, the djinn-like intervention of the ancestor, and the escape by sea – *A Thousand and One Nights*. This compendium of oral and written tales mediates between Condé's African saga and its supposedly European narrative devices. *Segu* directly links this mediation to the way merchants like Siga mediate "a grand network of exchanges and communications that extended across the universe." Condé's conjunction of material history and intertextuality recalls the crucial role Robert Irwin assigns to merchants in the proliferation of "the sea of stories" that traverses Africa, Europe, and Asia (Irwin 2004: 81). Walter Benjamin, too, mentions the "by no means insignificant share which traders had in the art of storytelling … They have left deep traces in the narrative cycle of *The Arabian Nights*" (Benjamin 1969: 101). Condé places Segu in the thick of this network of economic and narrative exchange, complicating the interplay of sources that inform this historical saga.

Condé, again, comments: "Like everyone else, I had read Alexandre Dumas's works, such as *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After*." As scholars from Muhsin al-Musawi and Roger Allen to Roland Barthes and Peter Brooks note, Alexandre Dumas and Honoré de Balzac in turn had read and drawn upon *A Thousand and One Nights*. Condé's assertion in her interview that she relied on the nineteenth-century French novel to structure *Segu* could be read as a sort of strategic omission, neglecting to mention explicitly what the saga suggests implicitly: the indebtedness of the nineteenth-century French novel to *A Thousand and One Nights* (on the centrality of this seminal work to literary tradition, see Naddaff in this volume). This collection belongs to a historic, world literary scene of circulation and

translation that crucially involves Africa and Africans. It also suggests an overdetermined narrative genealogy that formally reflects the heterogeneity of Segu and West Africa, a diasporic retort to discourses of rootedness and authenticity that the novels' rigorous historicization insists upon as well.

Condé's novel *Windward Heights* similarly mediates and decenters questions of influence and intertextuality so crucial to the world-systems approach to literary study. Condé dedicates *Windward Heights* to the author of its source text: "To Emily Brontë. Who I hope will approve of this interpretation [*lecture*] of her masterpiece. Honour and respect!" This enthusiastic salute suggests that the reader might not be in for the expected postcolonial re-reading, the sort of re-reading that "makes explicit what is latent, invisible, or otherwise suppressed in canonical texts and traditions, revealing the ways these texts and traditions are formed or deformed by the exigencies of European imperialism" (Yelin 2004: 84). Yet the tradition of postcolonial revision looms large over the critical reception of *Windward Heights*. There is a critical desire for Condé's text to write back to the empire, to exact a textual revenge for the "racial scripts that are barely hinted at" in the canon (Lionnet 2003: 50). Yet Condé's treatment of *Wuthering Heights*, precisely a novel about Heathcliff's revenge, disrupts the narrative logic of vengeance and the linear sequencing it depends upon. It does not offer "satisfaction" either to Razyé, Heathcliff's counterpart, or to the postcolonial reader. Leaning on the same sort of overdetermined, multidirectional narrative traffic encountered in *Segu*, *Windward Heights* not only deactivates the revenge plot within the narrative structure of the book, it deactivates the meta-narrative revenge plot between itself and its source text. Painting the gothic as a world literary genre, Condé's text reroutes lines of narrative influence along the lines of global economic exchange and thereby complicates nation-based as well as dichotomous metropolitan–provincial models of literary exchange prevalent in articulations of literary world systems.

*Windward Heights* incorporates numerous devices of English gothic fiction to establish an unhierarchical common ground between the two geographies. By aligning the Caribbean *habitation*, or plantation house, with the European castle, manor, or country house, Condé invites readers to perceive overlapping histories of terror and violence. On her wedding night, Condé's mulatto Cathy ruminates on the history of Belles-Feuilles, her new home that corresponds to Thrushcross Grange in Brontë's novel:

> Slaves raped by sadistic planters. Mistresses poisoned by a rival and dying in unspeakable suffering at the banquet table. Virgins sold to old men for money and parcels of land. Sisters lusted after by their brothers. Mothers by their sons … After slavery was restored by the infamous Richepanse, some Mandingo women strangled themselves rather than go back into irons. And discerning these walls and sighs amidst the echoes of the wedding feast, Cathy realized she was taking her place of her own accord in a long procession of victims.
>
> (Condé 1999: 49–50)

Rather than reading the Caribbean *habitation* as uniquely steeped in blood, these gothic elements recall the sadistic impulses given free rein at Wuthering Heights and

Thrushcross Grange. And just as *Windward Heights* highlights how Caribbean economics form part of this gothic weave of sex and blood, Condé's mode of referentiality prompts us to identify the same trends in the English gothic. Indeed, Raymond Williams has tracked the shifting legibility of violence in the English literature of the country house since the sixteenth century. He writes:

> It is not easy to forget that Sidney's *Arcadia*, which gives a continuing title to English neo-pastoral, was written in a park which had been made by enclosing a whole village and evicting the tenants. The elegant game was then only at arm's length – a rough arm's length – from a visible reality of country life.
>
> (Williams 1963: 22)

In the work of poets such as George Crabbe, Williams finds an attack (albeit limited) on this mystifying exorcism of economic violence within the English literary tradition. The gothic novel, from Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and J.W. Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), goes much farther in showcasing the potential for violence in castles, manors, and country houses. However, the gothic sensibility of Condé's novel also involves transnational displacements that reorient the lines of influence that would exclusively find in the English tradition the origins of the Caribbean gothic.

*Windward Heights* does not depend on the European gothic for exaggerated passions, supernatural beings, and records of violence and bloodlust. Five hundred-odd years of Caribbean history have offered plenty, and *Windward Heights* paints popular oral traditions as the bearer of this history. Echoing *Wuthering Heights*, a series of *récits* structure the novel, belonging primarily to the *mabos* (nannies and ladies-in-waiting), the fishermen, and the peasants whose lives intersect those of the main characters. The novel thereby offers a popular oral commentary on its action, filtering the plot through Guadeloupean gossip and public opinion. Gossip, public opinion, and popular supernatural philosophies mark the gothic as a local form, unsettling the genealogical indebtedness of Caribbean gothic to the English gothic tradition. In fact, *Windward Heights* suggests that the lines of indebtedness run both ways.

The phantasmagoric, Creole pantheon evoked in the novel – "esprits et *volans*," "*jans gajé*" – demarcates a local tradition antedating Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker. Furthermore, Joan Dayan argues that the phantasmagoric pantheon of the Caribbean and Europe derives from oral and written discursive contests in the West Indies over the illogical and contradictory system of racial taxonomy developed under colonial slavery:

> The figures of blackness imagined by the white colonialist exposed how unnatural became the attempt to sustain "natural" distinctions between races of men. This kingdom of grotesques would resonate in later supernatural "fictions", rooted quite naturally in the need for racist territoriality: Bronte's Heathcliff, not "a regular black"; the blood taint lurking in Dracula's not-quite-right white skin.
>
> (Dayan 1995: 61)

Addressing the popular counter-discourse that inverted the values of the white colonialist taxonomy, she writes:

> The gods, monsters, and ghosts spawned by racial terminology redefined the supernatural. What colonists called sorcery was rather an alternative philosophy. The most horrific spirits of the Americas came out of the perverse logic of the master reinterpreted and exposed by slaves who had been mediated to their bones by the colonial myths.
>
> (Dayan 1995: 66)

Caribbean society produced a host of gothic figures ("gods, monsters, and ghosts spawned by racial terminology" in Dayan's words) that traveled the lines of exchange and communication between Havana, Point-à-Pitre, Port-au-Prince, and New Orleans to New York, Liverpool, and Bordeaux. Both the legal taxonomies and popular oral traditions of the Caribbean, Dayan argues, fed the gothic literary imagination.

For this reason, Condé does not need to exact a revenge on her literary predecessor. *Windward Heights* does not seem driven by a sense of belatedness, of not having had the first word, of needing to set the record straight. The novel prompts us to recognize parallel, intersecting, and overdetermined narrative genealogies of the gothic. From Slavic vampire legends to the duppies, zombies, and *jans gajé* of the Caribbean basin that cumulatively fired trans-Atlantic popular and literary imaginations, multiple histories of internally riven societies soaked in blood draw *Windward Heights* and *Wuthering Heights* together. Rather than seeking revenge, Condé's novel asks us to attend to those histories with "honour and respect."

Both *Windward Heights* and *Segu*, then, generate an economically inflected sense of literary history marked by recursive, transnational circulations and local appropriations. The works of Condé, like writers of the Algerian, Indian, and Jewish diasporas discussed above, animate the "roots and routes" of texts, tales, and traditions. If David Damrosch has helpfully suggested understanding world literature "as an elliptical refraction of national literatures, with the source and host cultures providing the two foci that generate the elliptical space within which a work lives as world literature, connected to both cultures, circumscribed by neither alone" (2003: 283), diasporic literature supplements a further refraction as it marks the transnational flows and formations constituted by and constitutive of diasporic space. Conjuring world systems "before European hegemony," deconstructing metropolitan/provincial figurations of literary genealogy, and disrupting nationalist identifications, diaspora studies refract through an alternative set of spatial and temporal coordinates the mapping of world literary systems.

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# 25
# WORLD LITERATURE AND COSMOPOLITANISM

*César Domínguez*

In a book published in 2007, *The Literary in Theory*, Jonathan D. Culler argues that the reader whom Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *El hablador* (1987; *The Storyteller* 1989) addresses is not "the Peruvian national so much as an international cosmopolitan reader" (Culler 2007: 66). His argument is mainly directed against Benedict Anderson's interpretation of *El hablador* as a novel for a "Peruvian Spanish-reading public" (Anderson 1998: 355). For Culler, the references in the first paragraph of the novel to Dante's glimpse of Beatrice and materials from the Peruvian jungle in "terms accessible to the European reader" (2007: 66) prove straightforwardly which audience Vargas Llosa addresses. It is an "international cosmopolitan" audience, "likely to be struck by the unexpected contrast between the archetypal literary site and reminders of the unmarked scene identified with Peru" (66).

Culler's claim is based on a rather narrow view of a key feature of this novel, namely its composite enunciative structure. This structure is largely comprised of two sections: a "historical" one voiced by a writer-narrator from Lima and a "mythical" one voiced by a Machiguenga narrator. Culler, however, dismisses the section that "present[s] the lore of the Machiguengas," because "[t]he novel presents no warrant for these chapters" (62). He therefore bases his designation of the readership of Vargas Llosa's novel as cosmopolitan upon the section voiced by the writer-narrator, who, for Anderson, is none other than Vargas Llosa himself (Anderson 1998: 338). Contrary to Culler's contention, Anderson pays greater attention to the enunciative issue, and yet he too identifies a single national audience for a "masterpiece" which is "Latin American/Spanish/Peruvian nationalist," he says, "beyond doubt" (356).

Regardless of the complexity and interest of both Anderson's and Culler's interpretations, to which I cannot do justice here, what strikes me most is the fact that both critics – though they are well aware of the enunciative intricacies – seem confident about the possibility of singling out one kind of audience, whether national (for Anderson) or cosmopolitan (for Culler). This exclusiveness applies not only to the audience, but also to the narrators and the other characters of the novel. Other critics, such as Rita Gnutzmann (1992) and Yolanda Montalvo Aponte (1993), have

done the same thing. Significantly, they all seem to have overlooked the importance of Latin American theories for analyzing *El hablador*, and specifically Ángel Rama's "narradores transculturados" (transculturated narrators). Anderson (1998: 357) and Culler (2007: 61) concur in considering the writer-narrator as a "cosmopolitan figure" and "cosmopolitan Peruvian writer," whereas in the case of Saúl Zuratas, a friend of the writer-narrator, it is only Anderson who sees him as a "rich cosmopolitan Jew" (Anderson 1998: 356). Culler does not apply the cosmopolitan condition to this character, which may be due to the fact that, in his interpretation, "readers eventually come to take" the tribal storyteller "as Saúl Zuratas himself" (Culler 2007: 61). In any case, both Anderson and Culler implicitly concur in denying the cosmopolitan condition to the Machiguenga narrator. And yet travel and displacement – features traditionally associated with cosmopolitanism – trigger both narrators' stories.

This example shows the need to be cautious when approaching the concept of cosmopolitanism, which is commonly opposed – as both Anderson and Culler seem to advocate in their readings of *El hablador* – to the concept of nationalism. However, as Vinay Dharwadker reminds us, cosmopolitanism is a much older idea than the nation (2001: 5). The way in which narrators, characters, readers, and readings have been grouped as either national or cosmopolitan may ultimately explain why both Anderson and Culler have missed a crucial issue: this particular novel of Vargas Llosa initially has not met with the same warm critical reception as his previous works. This is true nationally, largely due to how it handles the indigenist issue (De Castro 2010). It is also true internationally, mainly because of what has been perceived as its lower degree of technical complexity (Rivas 2005).

I do not intend to address this issue here. What I want to discuss instead is a more abstract problem concerning the relation between cosmopolitanism and world literature. World literature in *El hablador* emerges with a reference to Dante which, argues Culler, "does not need explanation" for the "European reader" (2007: 66). We are not told what a "Latin American/Spanish/Peruvian" reader should make of this same reference. Nor is there any mention of the fact that Dante himself is a conspicuous example of an author who decides to abandon the "big world" (Latin universalism) in favor of a "local vernacularism." The question of how a "national/cosmopolitan" audience would relate to the Machiguenga mythopoiesis, in which "una sola palabra compuesta de muchas otras podía expresar un vasto pensamiento" (Vargas Llosa, *El hablador* 84; one single word made of many others may express a vast thought) is not even asked.

A reflection on the relation between cosmopolitanism and world literature (un)predictably leads us to a discussion of institutional boundaries and disciplinary lacunae. In the last chapter of *The Literary in Theory*, symptomatically entitled "Comparative Literature, at Last," Culler argues that the reason people are drawn to comparative literature is not "world literature," but a "polyglot experience" or an "idea of cosmopolitanism" (2007: 267). I will not discuss here Culler's claims about the boundaries between comparative and world literature. What I want to stress is how his argument on this disciplinary differentiality pinpoints the absence of cosmopolitanism in world literature studies.

Let us take as a piece of evidence a ground-breaking book, *What is World Literature?* Here the term "cosmopolitanism" is mentioned only four times, three of which

convey a negative meaning linked to values such as elitism and universalism in relation to Philarète Euphémon Chasles's and Charles W. Eliot's understandings of world literature (Damrosch 2003: 9, 121) and nineteenth-century anthologies (289). The fourth and single positive meaning is based on Bruce Robbins's concept of "locally inflected cosmopolitanism," whereby David Damrosch relates the multiple attachments of this kind of cosmopolitanism to a world literature whose "attachments are multiplied by the fact that it is at once a collective and an individual phenomenon" (298). The fact that this positive use of cosmopolitanism in world literature studies is indebted to Robbins has much to do with Robbins's claims about the "new worldliness of the Anglo-American humanities" (Robbins 1998: 246) as a "cosmopolitan," "intellectual oppositionality" (247).

The absence of the cosmopolitan idea in world literature studies correlates with the scant attention to world literature in cosmopolitanism studies. Such a situation appears even more paradoxical when one notes that etymologically "cosmopolitan" means "citizen of the world." As Inderpal Grewal puts it, "[t]he literary cognate to the 'world citizen' of nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism was Goethe's concept of 'world literature'" (2008: 182). But what for Kant and, to a large extent, Goethe was a "normative horizon" (Cheah 1998: 26) was an already existing condition for Marx in the bond between world literature and the cosmopolitan character of production and consumption. It is the situation described by Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* that we experience as globalization today, or, to speak with Walter D. Mignolo, a "homogeneity of the planet from above – economically, politically, and culturally" (Mignolo 2002: 157).

If cosmopolitanism and world literature are so closely related, to the point where one may wonder whether "cosmopolitan literature" is synonymous with "world literature" (some arguments against such an identification will be discussed further on), a question that needs to be answered is why the concept of cosmopolitanism plays such a minor role in world literature discussions. It is my contention that one important reason for this lies in disciplinary boundaries, that is to say the boundaries between comparative literature and world literature. Much of the legitimacy of world literature in the (US) academe is rooted in its self-proclaimed paradigm shift in relation to comparative literature (Thomsen 2008: 26–32). And cosmopolitanism is a key concept in the genealogy of comparative literature. A completely different but not wholly unrelated issue is that of the epistemological legitimacy of the substitution of "universal literature" for "world literature."

I cannot survey the cosmopolitan tradition within comparative literature in detail here. I shall mention only a founding text in institutional terms, Joseph Texte's *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et le cosmopolitisme littéraire*. (In non-institutional terms, the genealogy has a much older and illustrious history, from the champions of the Republic of Letters to Herder, Juan Andrés, Simonde de Sismondi, and Mme de Staël, to name but a few.) For Texte (1865–1900), an authority in European literary studies and the first to occupy a chair of comparative literature in France (University of Lyon, 1896), cosmopolitanism is equivalent to "exoticism" (Texte 1899: x) and designates the process whereby French literature felt attracted to "northern literature." Cosmopolitanism, in Texte's opinion, signals the inception of a movement towards a "composite idea," a literature "simply European" until the time it "would be universal" (377).

Although Texte foresaw the dissolution of the "literary fatherland[s]" in the twenty-fifth century, when the constitution of an authentic "European literature" would take place (377) via a cosmopolitanism which is now defined as "the worship of 'the literature of the world'" (378), it is well-known that for other scholars it was already possible in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to correlate European literature with "universal" literature. Contrary to Goethe and Texte, however, who attributed the increasing worldliness of literature to a growth of communications, exchanges, and translations, for these other scholars (in an Arnoldian vein) worldliness was but the result of the intrinsic humanism and universalism of European literature, whose expansion remained inexplicably unrelated to the colonial and imperial expansion of Europe. (For a parallel mystification at the end of the twentieth century, see Grewal 2008: 178.) From the 1950s to the 1970s, this idea of European literature as "universal literature" was bitterly attacked by comparatists such as René Étiemble and Adrian Marino (see Sayeh in this volume), and this opposition gathered considerable momentum at the 1964 ICLA Congress, when a whole section was devoted to "Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Literature."

It is interesting to note that the attack against "universal literature" suggested a solution to the disciplinary crisis (denounced by René Wellek in 1958) rather different from that proposed by the US academe. Contrary to Henry Remak's enlargement of comparative literature from interliterary comparison to interartistic and interdiscursive comparison, Étiemble advocated an interliterary comparison with a *real* global scope. East/West studies were a key contribution to such a global comparison. Their emphasis, however, was still on "literary universals." Ironically, this association between cosmopolitanism and literary universals was fused with the deep-rooted tradition of European abstract, ahistorical universalism and intellectual internationalism. It is this association that led A. Owen Aldridge, as late as 1983, to still advocate "universal literature" as either "any work which reflects attitudes, situations or experiences which are felt or understood by human beings in all cultures" or "any work which contains elements broad enough to appeal to the average person in any literary culture" (Aldridge 1983: 27). It is here that the substitution of "universal literature" for "world literature" provides epistemological soundness and has far-reaching ontological consequences.

Any future assessment of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and world literature should contend with both the cosmopolitan tradition within comparative literature which I have just mentioned and the history of cosmopolitanism per se. As for this second issue, though it is obviously a rather restricted view, I will concentrate for the sake of my argument on the period 1989–2001 and its aftermath (for a comprehensive history of the concept of cosmopolitanism, see Delanty and Inglis 2011). This is an important period because it predates the most recent discussions and "artifacts" on/of world literature (including the Bedford, Longman, and Norton anthologies, with the significant change from "world masterpieces" to "world literature" in the latter case during these years) and demonstrates how both world literature and cosmopolitanism are closely related concepts. Note, firstly, how Damrosch (2003) defines world literature as: (i) "a mode of circulation and reading" (5), (ii) literature that "gain[s] on balance in translation" (289), and (iii) "multiple *windows on the world*" (15). Compare, secondly, these three meanings with the six perspectives on

cosmopolitanism provided by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (2002: 8–14): (i) emerging socio-political condition; (ii) philosophy or worldview; (iii) political project for creating effective transnational institutions; (iv) political project for enabling people to act upon their multiple subject positions; (v) cultivation of an attitude or disposition; and (vi) ability to deal with others and the world. Vertovec and Robin's cluster of cosmopolitan meanings is important because it summarizes key developments in cosmopolitanism theory between what Berthold Schoene has called the "two 9/11 events" (Schoene 2009: 6–7), in a conflation of the global and the US calendrical formats, that is, the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 and the World Trade Center attacks on 11 September 2001.

Whereas the fall of the Berlin Wall gave rise to what one may call a "cosmopolitan euphoria," which can be epitomized in Ulf Hannerz's 1990 statements on cosmopolitanism as a "willingness to engage with the Other [ … ,] an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz 1990: 239), the World Trade Center attacks dramatically increased the need for a more critical stance towards cosmopolitanism, one that changes cosmopolitanism *tout court* into a "realistic cosmopolitanism" geared to "ethical responsibility" and "firm political commitment" (Schoene 2009: 7). An evident outcome of such a critical cosmopolitanism when applied to world literature is an against-the-grain, mournful reading of Damrosch's third definition in relation to the destruction of Windows on the World.

In what follows, I shall sketch some of the connections between Damrosch's definitions of world literature and Vertovec and Robin's six perspectives on cosmopolitanism. My aim is to chart some points of intersection within what – drawing on Scott L. Malcomson's "actually existing cosmopolitanisms" – I call "actually existing cosmo-practices." This is a practical step that needs to be taken in order to foster future collaboration between the two fields of study. Neither the number of cosmo-practices, nor their discussion here, is meant to be exhaustive.

## Cosmopolitanism as world-literature

"World-literature" is clearly a term analogous to Fernand Braudel's "world-economy" and Immanuel Wallerstein's "world-system," which has been recently deprecated by Alexander Beecroft on the grounds that it "has the perhaps unintended effect of re-inscribing a hegemonic cultural centre" (Beecroft 2008: 88). Although I agree with Beecroft that this negative effect is most conspicuous in Pascale Casanova's and (to a lesser extent) Franco Moretti's models of world literature, I think the non-intentionality Beecroft himself acknowledges is an important reason to not dismiss a concept which does not convey a "mono-centric" meaning per se. Actually, Beecroft's "panchoric literature," which he defines as "literary texts and systems of circulation operating across a range of epichoric communities, united to some degree in language and culture" (93), seems to me to be very much indebted not only to the concept of the "Panhellenic," as this author claims, but also to world-literature itself when it is defined as "a world-system within which literature is produced and circulates" (Beecroft 2008: 88). Not to mention that there are other approaches to

world-literature that should not be overlooked (for *littérature-monde* and *Francophonie*, see Le Bis and Rouaud 2007. See also Lionnet in this volume).

World-literature may represent a valuable tool to avoid ahistorical interpretations of world literature, including ahistorical interpretations of literary circulation. The six modes in which literatures and environments relate, according to Beecroft, are a significant contribution in this direction, which may be implemented from a cosmopolitan perspective. What Beecroft calls "panchoric literature" broadly corresponds to what Sheldon Pollock has termed "cosmopolitan literature." In Pollock's comparative and historical model, cosmopolitanism is contrasted to vernacularism. Both of them are modes of literary (and intellectual and political) communication. Pollock's definition of cosmopolitanism deserves special attention here. It is a "literary communication that travels far, indeed, without obstruction from any boundaries at all, and, more important, that thinks of itself as unbounded, unobstructed, unlocated" (Pollock 2002: 22). Cosmopolitan literatures are, therefore, world-literatures, but with an emphasis on the cultural process itself.

Pollock has tested both cosmopolitanism and vernacularism beyond the "narrow European analytical and temporal frameworks" (18) via a comparison between Western European and South Asian literatures. This comparison highlights how similarities are equally as important as differences. Whereas Western European vernacularization ("of necessity") was concomitant to the production of the nation-state, Southern Asian vernacularization ("of accommodation") was concomitant to the production of the "vernacular polity" (16). Furthermore, Pollock's analysis is relevant in at least two other ways when it comes to exploring the relationship between world literature and cosmopolitanism. First, it shows in methodological terms that we still lack a macro-historical comparative perspective and a cosmopolitan vocabulary; the latter meaning that analyses of cosmopolitanism rarely survey how this idea is conceptualized in non-Western cultures. The same may be said of "world literature." Secondly, Pollock's analysis seriously undermines the teleology of most discussions on world literature in our age of globalization, for both cosmopolitanism and vernacularism are thought of as action rather than as declaration (17). This perspective throws new light on the process whereby, around the eleventh century, writers decided to "reshape the boundaries of their cultural universe by renouncing the larger world for the smaller place" (16). This is a fruitful intersection for testing how cosmopolitanism may contribute to avoiding the danger of "insistent presentism" in world literature studies "that erases the past as a serious factor" (Damrosch 2003: 17).

## Cosmopolitan/world literature

As suggested before, one may wonder whether "cosmopolitan literature" is synonymous with "world literature." If one pays attention to the ways in which the concept of cosmopolitanism has been reshaped between "the two 9/11 events," it is obvious that the answer changes, depending on the moment one selects within this period. The closer one looks into the positions defended by the "pioneers in the field of cosmopolitan theory" (Schoene 2009: 2), the easier it seems to be to replace

"world" for "cosmopolitan" in recent definitions of world literature. Thus, for instance, Damrosch's three meanings share a great deal with Hannerz's view on cosmopolitanism (Damrosch 2003: 239). But one should not overlook the fact that one of Damrosch's definitions of world literature as "multiple windows on the world" is an important caveat against collapsing world literature into the cosmopolitan. Conversely, the closer one looks into the positions advocated by "critical" or "realistic cosmopolitans," the more difficult it seems to equate "cosmopolitan" with "world literature." How to translate, for example, cosmopolitanism as a project linked to "human rights and, indirectly, to democracy" (Mignolo 2002: 182) into world literature? As a globalized version of *littérature engagée*?

Between aesthetics and ethics, a distinct group of cosmopolitan writing has been emerging during recent years. In 1997, Brennan praised the "epical dimension" of cosmopolitan writing as summarized in eight features – from a dismissal of European confidence about its influence on Latin American and African works and hostility to the legacy of decolonization; to the extension of aesthetic criteria such as complexity, subtlety and irony (Brennan 1997: 38–41). These features show how the discussion was centered at that moment around the Jamesonian category of "Third World literature" and the power relations fostered by the "literary semiperiphery." After the interlude represented by Amanda Anderson's study, in which the concept of "detachment" was favored over cosmopolitanism (Anderson 2001: 31), Rebecca L. Walkowitz (2006) and Berthold Schoene (2009) are the main proponents of a "cosmopolitan corpus."

For Walkowitz, writers such as Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Salman Rushdie, W.G. Sebald, and Kazuo Ishiguro employed the salient features of modernist narrative to promote a "critical cosmopolitanism," which means "thinking beyond the nation but also comparing, distinguishing, and judging among different versions of transnational thought; testing moral and political norms, including the norms of critical thinking; and valuing informal as well as transient models of community" (Walkowitz 2006: 2). Therefore, Walkowitz's "critical cosmopolitanism" combines, on the one hand, Max Horkheimer's "critical theory" as extended by Theodor W. Adorno (suspicion of instrumental action and responsible theory) and Stuart Hall (cultural politics rooted in differentiation) and, on the other hand, a suspicion of "planetary humanism." From these critical stances, the works Walkowitz analyzes are "cosmopolitan" because they approach "large-scale international events, such as world war and immigration, by focusing on the trivial or transient episodes of everyday life" (10).

In contrast to Brennan's and Walkowitz's international corpus, Schoene analyzes cosmopolitanism from inside, and therefore tests the very limits of the "plurinational" literature of Britain (Schoene 2009: 7). In Schoene's view, "we may currently be witnessing the emergence of a new British cosmopolitanism, whose emergence is accompanied by the rise of a new kind of novel – 'the cosmopolitan novel'" (11). Versus Benedict Anderson, Schoene thinks that the novel may adapt to a vaster space beyond the nation. It is this new location which gives the "cosmopolitan novel" its defining feature of representing a "worldwide human living and global community" (17). Schoene's proposal deviates, therefore, from Brennan's emphasis on postcolonial core–periphery axes and builds on Walkowitz's interest in the

relationship between the novel and large-scale international events. His stress on a view from inside is best represented by the attempt to conceive of cosmopolitanism as a way of bridging "the rift between the world of globalised business … and its countless sub-worlds of powerless, disenfranchised daily living" (Schoene 2009: 14).

Schoene's latter argument of a "global*ised* world," one that has not yet gone into a "state of accomplished globality" (5), is momentous for encouraging the translation of world literature into realistic cosmopolitanism in the aftermath of 9/11. In accordance with a view on cosmopolitanism from inside, Schoene claims that it is "the 'world literature' of cosmopolitan human experience" (16) that is best suited to contribute to cosmopolitan theory and politics (12). This is a good example of how Samuel Scheffler's "two strands" of cosmopolitanism – namely, a "doctrine about justice" and a "doctrine about culture" – are not mutually exclusive; and provides world literature with another dimension for "elliptical refraction" (Damrosch 2003: 281).

## Cosmopolitan reading of world literature as a practice of conviviality

Starting from his definition of cosmopolitanism as "universalism plus difference," Kwame Anthony Appiah calls "cosmopolitan reading" the reading that rejoices at difference (Appiah 2001: 202), a *spatial* difference: "Cosmopolitan reading presupposes a world in which novels … travel between places where they are understood differently, because people are different and welcome to their difference" (224). A good example of such a cosmopolitan reading is provided by the bookcase of Amitav Ghosh's grandfather, inasmuch as its "vastness and cosmopolitanism" (Ghosh 1998: 23) enjoyed a "much more enthusiastic reception outside [India]" than in Europe (16). Yet Ghosh stresses an element for a cosmopolitan reading which one misses in Appiah's argument, namely the importance not only of space, but also of time.

The importance of time may be traced back to T.S. Eliot's arguments about what is considered to be an opposite idea, that is, parochialism or, in Eliot's words, "provincialism." Next to a "provincialism of space," argues Eliot, one has to take into consideration a "provincialism of time," "one for which history is merely the chronicle of human devices which have served their turn and been scrapped, one for which the world is the property solely of the living" (Eliot 1945: 30). Although Wai Chee Dimock does not refer explicitly to Eliot's distinction, I find that her concept of "deep time" may be fruitfully put in relation to a spatio-temporal cosmopolitanism, as a key articulation of world literature, which is precisely the setting wherein Dimock locates a form of indebtedness, or "double threading," for "American" literature. By "deep time" Dimock understands a "set of longitudinal frames, at once projective and recessional, with input going both ways, and binding continents and millennia into many loops of relations, a densely interactive fabric" (Dimock 2006: 3–4).

This "densely interactive fabric" is a beautiful image for capturing Paul Gilroy's concept of "conviviality" as it may be applied to world literature, for it describes a

process of "cohabitation and interaction" (Gilroy 2004: xi). In accordance with the kind of cosmopolitanism Gilroy advocates, his concept of conviviality "does not describe the absence of racism or the triumph of tolerance" (xi). It is, instead, a different setting, one wherein cosmopolitanism is understood as a "network of interconnectedness and solidarity that could resonate across boundaries, reach across distances, and evade other cultural and economic obstacles" (5). Here there is still, however, a high dose of naïveté, as conviviality is thought of exclusively in terms of a "familiar" racism – with disturbing connections to Appiah's criterion of the familiar – but not also in terms of an "unfamiliar" racism, that is, the "amorphous racism [that] abounds, rationalized by the claim of 'self-defense'" (Butler 2006: 39), as symbolically expressed by the omnipresent motto "if you see something, say something."

A cosmopolitanism that has to constantly negotiate with the "humanizing effect," with the criterion "by which a human life is grievable" (Butler 2006: 38), may provide world literature, understood as a "mode of reading," with firmer ground for "evaluating stories together [ … and] learning to align our responses to the world" (Appiah 2006: 29). This is a cosmopolitan reading that cares about the erasure of the past, indeed, but also about a collective shared future (Dimock's "projection") as perceived in the present. In any case, what should not be overlooked is that neither mirrors nor windows grant access to the whole.

"Interestingly enough," says Scheffler, "there is no consensus among contemporary philosophers and theorists about how the precise content of a cosmopolitan position is to be understood" (Scheffler 1999: 255). What Scheffler seems to take as a sign of a theoretical shortcoming, I regard instead as a sign of several "discrepant cosmopolitanisms" (Clifford 1992: 108) in action. The "cosmo-practices" around world literature that I have outlined here are three examples of such discrepant cosmopolitanisms. When cosmopolitanism is viewed as action rather than as a single declaration one is entitled to speak in a more fruitful and promising way of its banality. I draw, obviously, on Michael Billig's concept of "banal nationalism." Notwithstanding the apparent similarity, "banal" has very different meanings in each case. When applied to nationalism, "banal" names the "ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced" (Billig 1995: 6), a reproduction wherein banality has proved and still proves to be an efficient tool for evil (Arendt 2006). When applied to cosmopolitanism, however, I contend that "banality" stresses the lack of a supporting (international) polity for its project on "planetary conviviality" (Mignolo 2002: 157). It is a process from below shaped by its longing for global responsibility and world citizenship, where "from below" should not be confused with a utopian egalitarianism and prophecy. This is an important qualification to Ulrich Beck's understanding of banal cosmopolitanism as a plain outcome of globalization (Beck 2002: 28).

Correspondingly, banality refracts differently when applied to *national* literature and *world* literature. In contrast to national literatures, world literature – as in the case of cosmopolitanism – lacks a supporting (international) polity. This gives fresh evidence regarding a cosmopolitan approach to world literature as a "form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time" (Damrosch 2003: 281). In any case, when it comes to "detached engagement," the issue of

representation is still a compelling one for both national and world literature. Losing/gaining in translation and "authentic expression"/ventriloquism should not be considered as direct counterparts of nationalism/cosmopolitanism. Both the Machiguenga narrator, Montesquieu's Usbek and Rica (the main characters of *Lettres persanes* who discuss French mores and hence the cultural cleavage of Orient and Occident) and Hesketh Pearson's Bahram (a fictitious Persian critic who comments about English literature) are lies, indeed, but, as Vargas Llosa puts it for novels in general, "by lying, they express a curious truth" (Vargas Llosa 1996: 320).

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# Part III
# THE THEORETICAL DIMENSION

# 26
# TEACHING WORLDLY LITERATURE

*Martin Puchner*

## I

My approach to world literature has been shaped by two experiences: teaching world literature, mostly but not exclusively Columbia's great books program, and my work as the general editor of the *Norton Anthology of World Literature* (3rd edition). The chief challenge I have had to confront in both endeavors is world literature's apparent aspiration to include, quite simply, all of literature. "You mean, *everything?!*" is what people often ask, incredulously, when I tell them that I am interested in world literature. But even though "world literature" does seem to aspire to such an impossible totality, it has in fact always been concerned with considerably less than the whole. The formula "less than the whole" is of course necessarily true in the case of world literature anthologies (and syllabi) for the immensely practical reason of limited space, even though it should be added that the *Norton Anthology of World Literature* has grown from about 400 pages to over 6000. But it cannot and should not grow indefinitely. Despite the logic of expansion, world literature cannot mean the increasing inclusion of more and more literatures, and not only for practical reasons. To arrive at a proper concept of world literature, we have to restrict its meaning, specifying in what sense it is something other than a process of accumulation that aims to include the whole.

I have come to take this incompleteness not as an obstacle to be overcome, but as a principle to be embraced in the classroom, in the work on the anthology, and also when it comes to articulating the conceptual framework that underpins both. Indeed, incompleteness goes back all the way to the origin of the concept of world literature: for Goethe, the age of world literature was always in the making, always in the process of arriving, but never quite here yet: "the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (Eckermann 1955: 211). We have a paradox here that would continue to characterize world literature to this day: world literature is at hand, it is ready to be grasped, and yet we cannot quite get hold of it yet; we cannot take it and its arrival for granted. On the contrary, we, every one of us, must strive to hasten its approach. Without such striving, which is reminiscent of Faust's most salient feature, the arrival of world literature will be delayed,

perhaps indefinitely. This futurist temporality of world literature seems to have been resolved when Marx and Engels pick up the term just a few decades later, in their account of bourgeois capitalism. Now world literature has arrived through a process described in one of the *Communist Manifesto*'s most famous paragraphs. The revolutionary effects of bourgeois capitalism are rendered in the dramatic present tense, as culminating in the arrival of world literature: "and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature" (Marx and Engels 2005: 11). But despite the present tense, the *Communist Manifesto* describes an ongoing process, one that has not quite played itself out yet. World literature is still in the process of emerging.

In my experience, teaching *Faust* and the *Communist Manifesto* side by side with an eye towards world literature works well. *Faust* opens in the Doctor's study, which is to say, a library containing all kinds of literature, including Greek tragedies, a staple of world literature. From this concentrated accumulation of world literature, however, we move soon out of the library: with Mephistopheles as his guide, Faust wants to see the world, and does. The very plot of the play moves from the book to the world. The *Communist Manifesto* lends itself to being taught as world literature equally well, and not only because it mentions "world literature" at a crucial moment. More important is the form of the *Communist Manifesto* itself, which created a whole new genre. For the *Communist Manifesto* not only talks about world literature, it itself, through its urgent form and tone, seeks to hasten the approach of world literature. When I teach the *Communist Manifesto* as literature, I emphasize this performative dimension of a text that more than any other wants to intervene in the world. But there is one more dimension that is even more important: the *Communist Manifesto* is a performative genre that presents itself as a peculiar form of world literature. It is calculated for instant translation and distribution in many languages, a new international world literature in the making (Puchner 2006, 47ff.). Marx and Engels even downplay the fact that it was originally written in German: it is almost as if it were not written in any particular language, but meant for translation from the beginning.

## II

Goethe, Marx and Engels show that world literature is open temporally, that it never considers itself complete and therefore is oriented towards the future. At the same time, one must confront the challenge of totality, that world literature seeks to incorporate all of literature; in terms of geography, this after all is built into the conjunction that makes up this term: literature and world. My approach here will be to understand "world" not as an aspiration towards totality but as a term that restricts the other: literature. World literature is not, simply, all of literature. Rather, world literature is that subset of literature that maintains a crucial relation to the world. World literature is literature insofar as it pertains to the world: a worldly literature.

If "world" modifies "literature," then world literature would have to be literature written for the world, literature that is relevant to the world and engaged with the world. It would also mean literature that has been taken up by the world, emerging in the struggle for dominance. This does not mean that world literature is the

literature of the victors. Rather, it is the literature arising from this struggle itself. My conception of a worldly literature goes back to Edward Said's essay on Auerbach, in which he calls Auerbach a "critic of the earthly world."

It is from this vantage point that I would like to revisit the debate that has haunted world literature, especially anthologies of world literature and the syllabi drawing on them, from the beginning: the canon debates. I am talking here specifically about the situation in the United States, where world literature took the form of ever-expanding world literature anthologies. Here, too, it turns out to be true that world literature is an intensely local affair. Conceptions of world literature pertaining to anthologies such as the Norton exist primarily in the United States for reasons that have to do with the importation and flowering of Humboldt's conception of the university, the history of multiculturalism, and the demands of large introductory culture and literature courses. (Claims that American world literature anthologies are imperialist instruments through which "Students in Taiwan or Nigeria will learn about the literatures of the world through English translations organized by the United States" (Spivak 2003: xii) have no basis in the reality of anthologies, their distribution, or their actual use.) In the United States, world literature historically emerged as collections of the so-called Western Canon, usually called Western Masterpieces, which were then slowly supplemented by non-Western masterpieces, until the very term "Masterpieces" was dropped and replaced with the title: "World Literature." (I will only note in passing that, interestingly enough, the term "world music" underwent the opposite process and describes precisely non-Western music.) In any case, it was the canon debate that led to the extreme expansion of anthologies of world literature, initiating a phase dominated by a cumulative model: more and more literature had to be included, and not only so-called masterpieces.

On the whole, the teaching of world literature has followed suit, with many formerly "Western literature" or "Western masterpieces" courses giving way to world literature. My own experience at Columbia was dominated by a different, more openly supplemental model. The two-year sequence, called Literature Humanities, had begun its life as a kind of remedial course, ensuring that students from various backgrounds would know the basic canon of Western literature. In the 1980s and 1990s it retained its exclusively Western orientation, but over the years companion courses were added to represent other literary traditions and cultures. In my teaching experience, this had both good and bad effects. The first semester of Lit Hum, as the course is commonly called, is tightly organized around Greek literature, plus the Bible, and thus makes for a coherent set of readings. Where it fails is in generating a sense of the interconnectedness of cultures as well as creating surprising connections across different cultures. This is the advantage of genuine world literature courses, which can track the movement of genres, for example the frame narrative from India to the Arab World and then to the Western Middle Ages.

The canon debate was immensely valuable and necessary: in Goethe's and Marx's sense, it hastened the approach of world literature – certainly as a title for anthologies. At the same time, the canon debates led world literature down some wrong paths, certainly when it came to world literature anthologies, leading to the inclusion of more and more short excerpts that obeyed a representational logic and threatened to become merely tokenistic. World literature anthologies tended to become

samplers, seeking to represent totality – now in the name of diversity – through snippets. This goal of comprehensive totality without restrictions needs to be abandoned and we need to return to the Goethean and Marxian notion of world literature. Put in terms of the canon debate, this means that we need to arrive at a notion of world literature as something other than a sampler of the whole, something based on a restricted notion of world literature. In my suggestion, the concept worldly literature offers such a restriction, aiming to tell a story not of the whole but of a conjunction, a story about literature *and* the world.

This conjunction can be viewed also from another angle as well: not only what literature does to and with the world, but the capacity of literature to create worlds and therefore to engage the existing one. I am thinking here of Nelson Goodman and his inquiry into the art of "worldmaking." When I started to work on the anthology, I did not expect this feature to be of importance, but increasingly it turned out to be central. In fact, it was this emphasis on world making that led me in the opposite direction from the sampler, reminding me and my collaborators of the importance of including long excerpts and even complete works: in the last analysis, only complete works unfold and create complete worlds. Worldly literature as I understand it is also that: literature that is world making.

In teaching literature, I increasingly find myself remembering that the primary experience of students reading works of literature for the first time is the experience of entering a world. They seek to orient themselves in that world, trying to figure out what rules apply there, how it is furnished with props and characters. Plot often comes in as a secondary consideration, as a vehicle for unfolding this strange new world that they are asked to inhabit for many hours. Surely, world literature must also take account of this, to my mind, primary function of literature: that it creates literary worlds.

Let me press on to another facet of this term. Literature that is taken up by the world is also literature that is appropriated, adopted, distorted, used, and abused by the world. It is literature located at what Lionel Trilling once called the "dark and bloody cross-roads where literature and politics meet" (Trilling 2008: 11). Worldly literature is literature in the thrall of empires, victim and facilitator of conquests. In our anthology, we therefore seek to foreground this aspect of literature. Worldly literature is not discrete, delicate, and benign, but embraced by the world, is made for the world, and put in the service of worldly purposes. Worldly literature must take empires, both ancient and modern, to be part of the making of world literature.

Literature's worldly entanglements include conquest and empire, narratives of collective origin and national destiny, but they also include economic matters. Here I come to another aspect of world literature that is often decried, but also often misunderstood. Frequently one hears complaints that world literature is all-too-worldly in the sense that it is too wised up to the world, too calculating with respect to the force that already Goethe knew to be at the center of world literature: the world market. For Goethe, world literature meant that through translation texts produced by different nations and locales were made available to all and thus would enhance mutual understanding: world literature as a contribution to world peace. This, of course, is often the justification for teaching world literature, that it enhances mutual understanding among cultures.

The other reason why translation is so central for Goethe is because it concerns Germany's particular contribution to world literature. What Goethe envisions for Germany is that it will provide the translations. Here is what he writes some time after the famous remarks on the age of world literature I quoted above: " … whoever knows and studies German inhabits the market place where all nations offer their products [Ware]; he plays the translator even as he reaps profit [sich bereichert]" (Goethe 1827: 86). Goethe considers world literature to be something that concerns not only the production of literature, but also its distribution and translation. In other words, world literature is not written, but made – made by a market-place in translation. This world market that makes world literature was, of course, something to which Marx and Engels accorded a central place in their notion of bourgeois world literature. David Damrosch's definition of world literature as literature that "gains in translation" also aims at the nexus of distribution and translation (Damrosch 2003: 281). At this point, detractors of world literature will feel vindicated: this is what we have been suspecting all along: world literature is a marketing ploy!

The best example of this all-too-worldly aspect of world literature is, of course, American: I am thinking of Mark Twain, an all-too-worldly promoter of literature if ever there was one, a good example of the writer as entrepreneur. His *The Gilded Age*, co-written with Charles Dudley Warner, is a novel about the period that is sometimes called the first age of globalization in the late nineteenth century. A powerful indictment of greed and politics, *The Gilded Age* seems timely in more than one way in this our own gilded age; appropriately enough, it is focused on land speculation, featuring an heiress who tries to persuade the government, through intense lobbying efforts, to buy up her land. The deal goes sour. The novel itself, by contrast, made it, selling 35,000 copies in the first two months after publication. Twain couldn't resist and exploited this success by subsequently using the character Colonel Beriah Sellers for a popular play that was performed all across America.

The fact that *The Gilded Age* was actually successful is not my main point. What is remarkable is that Twain and Warner actually marketed their book as "world literature." They did so by placing short quotes from different languages and in different scripts, including hieroglyphics, Chinese script, and Icelandic, among many others, at the top of each chapter, seemingly without connection or explanation; and also without translation. What were they thinking? In their preface, they give us the following explanation:

> No apology is needed for following the learned custom of placing attractive scraps of literature at the heads of our chapters. It has been truly observed by Wagner that such headings, with their vague suggestions of the matter which is to follow them, pleasantly inflame the reader's interest without wholly satisfying his curiosity, and we will hope that it may be found to be so in the present case.
>
> Our quotations are set in a vast number of tongues; this is done for the reason that very few foreign nations among whom the book will circulate can read in any language but their own; whereas we do not write for a particular class or sect or nation, but to take in the whole world.
>
> (Twain and Warner 1994: xxii)

As so often with Twain, one must be careful not to take this at face value. In the first instance, the "attractive scraps of literature" are said to be there in order to whet the reader's or buyer's appetite, without satisfying it completely. So far, so good. But certainly, Twain and Warner cannot seriously suggest that their book was meant for people speaking Egyptian? And even when the two authors use quotes from spoken languages, a few scraps of literature at the top of the page certainly would not attract readers, or buyers, who do not know English, deplorable as this may be. No, these quotes were not meant for those unfortunate readers who only know their own tongue, and *The Gilded Age* is therefore not meant for the "whole world," but indeed just for English speakers. Twain is playing here with an emerging rhetoric of world literature as a multi-lingual literature beyond the nation. For us this is a familiar definition of world literature, fragments of text in ancient and modern languages. Twain takes this notion of world literature, parodies it, and transforms it into a marketing ploy intended for the home market.

I'm not going to defend Twain. But if we want to arrive at a good definition of worldly literature, I think we need to include Twain, along with Goethe and Marx, as a writer who recognizes the relation between world literature and the world market. I am convinced that this aspect, too, should play a role in the teaching of world literature, especially of contemporary world literature. For example, I often include "The Novel In Africa," a chapter in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello*, in which the Australian writer and an old acquaintance find themselves lecturing about literature on a cruise ship, a perfect metaphor for the role literature and its teaching plays in a world market.

Another dimension of worldly literature is bound to be even more controversial than world literature's relation to the world market: namely its relation to religion. This, after all, is the original meaning of "worldly": an attitude directed towards *this* world, rather than the next. The question of religion also touches on a very concrete problem of world literature anthologies, namely the fact that the understanding of literature changes dramatically and radically from one time and place to the next. Indeed the notion of literature itself is a relatively recent coinage. And even within the Latin tradition of the word, our notion of literature is a distinctly post-Romantic one. In gathering different writings, from classical Chinese wisdom literature through the foundational epics of the Mediterranean basin and to the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Qur'an, not to speak of the various oral traditions that were transcribed in the modern era, we are clearly imposing a modern notion of literature onto an extremely diverse array of texts.

In our work on the *Norton Anthology*, my collaborators and I have been trying to turn this problem into an asset: we are including texts that speak directly to these differing conceptions of literature so that students will find in the anthology material that will address this problem head on. This is a practical solution: rather than imposing a single conception of literature, we are simply gathering different texts and emphasize their different forms of literariness, including the ways in which they cannot be captured by a recent notion of literature or literariness.

The same approach works for the classroom. I have taught the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament several times to students ranging from orthodox Jews to evangelical Christians. I announce the project right away: we are reading texts as

literature. I remember one semester when an orthodox Jewish student, who had transferred to Columbia from Yeshiva University, really got into it, applying his knowledge of the text and his interpretive skills to this literary project. There is no doubt that this "worldy" reading project is anachronistic: the Hebrew Bible was not written to be discussed as literature in a twenty-first century classroom at a US university. But as a matter of fact, none of the texts on the Lit Hum syllabus or in other world literature syllabi and anthologies, with the possible exception of very recent work, was written for this purpose or even with this possibility in mind.

On a conceptual level, however, this solution is only partial. It does not address the way in which world literature stands to this problem, including and especially to the problem of secular literariness (but also to the religious overtones of modern literariness, the so-called "religion of art" etc.). Does including religious texts in a world literature anthology mean imposing onto them a secular notion of literature? Here I hope that the notion of worldly literature can help us mediate between religion and secularization. Speaking of worldly literature as I understand it is not the same as simply insisting on a secular notion of literature. This difference is crucial. As a concept, worldly literature does not oppose itself to religion the way the secular and the project of secularization do. Rather, by pointing to *this* world, the worldly acknowledges the possibility of the *other* world; it merely says that it will only (or at any rate equally) be concerned with *this* one. In the same way, worldly literature does not seek to secularize religious literature; it simply says that within the purview of its concept, literature will be looked at in a worldly way. This includes the ways in which literature mobilizes the other world for this one. The religious valence of a text will be considered, but it will be considered in its worldly effects.

The this-worldly aspect of literature brings me to my last point. I have been stressing the crucial relation of literature to this, our world, rather than the next. And yet, one of the ways in which literature – all literature, but perhaps particularly world literature – concerns itself with our world is by constructing alternatives to it. Open any page in any anthology and you enter a new world. These worlds are in many ways tethered to our world, but they also, deliberately, seek to leave it behind. Even though all literature creates worlds, there are particular genres that foreground this function. Among them are creation myths, and for this reason Emily Wilson and Wiebke Denecke created a cluster in the new edition of the Norton anthology, a cluster called "Creation and the Cosmos" to capture this world-creation aspect. Now, one might well say that creation myths had, and sometimes still have, an explanatory function directed at our world. At the same time, however, what they do is create, giving us a rendering of a world on a cosmic scale. The point here is that these worlds, along with all other worlds of literature, are possible worlds, alternative worlds, but this also means worlds that are presented as existing ones. To the extent that the possible worlds created by literature are worlds in the first place, they demand to be related to our world: they remain worldly.

A good example of several of the features of world literature that I have emphasized, including the interest in cross-cultural traffic and connections, the relation of literature and empires, and finally the role of world creation, is the Mayan epic *Popol Vuh*. Based on material from the Mayan classical age, the *Popol Vuh* existed in the form of Mayan glyphs. The writing functioned primarily as a mnemonic device to be

actualized in oral performance. This original, written form, in any case, is quickly lost, or hidden away, when the Spanish land and begin burning cultural artifacts. The destructive realities of the Spanish empire here intersect quite starkly with the life of the *Popol Vuh*, which has to go underground. It does not remain there, however. Some time between 1554 and 1558, a Mayan trained in the Latin alphabet writes down a full, actualized version of the *Popol Vuh*. In the early eighteenth century, Francisco Ximénes, a friar working as a parish priest in the town of Chichicastenango encountered the transcribed version, copied it and added a Spanish translation (Tedlock 1996). The Spanish empire almost destroyed the text; but then, by bringing Latin literacy to some Mayans, it also facilitated the transcription and then translation of this text, which ensured its eventual status as world literature, as a text read all over the world. It has an important place in our anthology, as it does in other anthologies.

The *Popol Vuh* also is an example of cross-cultural influence and echoes. Elaborated and written down after the conquest, it contains a layer of Christian influence, especially from the Hebrew Bible. More intriguingly, there is a story of the flood, which may have been imported by the Spanish. The biblical version of the flood, of course, may itself have been derived from the older *Epic of Gilgamesh*, or at least parallels it. In any case, we have here a story that exists in one of the earliest works of literature that is echoed in the Hebrew Bible, and in Mesoamerica.

Finally, it is a story of world creation. First, the *Popol Vuh* does begin with a creation story, involving not one but several successive creations. One of the most fascinating aspects of this text is the creation of humans. Several aborted attempts led to various mannequins and monkeys, before proper humans emerge. Finally, once the epic moves from gods and god-like ancestors to humans and their generations, world creation acquires yet another dimension: the naming of the world. The epic names and in this sense creates the world of the Maya, takes possession of it, makes it their own. That this act of naming is crucial in this text's relation to the Maya world is clear from the very last line of the text, written in a retrospective glance by its scribe and translator. This scribe leaves us with a lament: "This is enough about the being of Quiché, given that there is no longer a place to see it" (Tedlock 1996: 198). I hear a feeling of loss in these last lines, a lament. The original book is being hidden, or lost; in any case, it is being replaced by the transliteration we are reading. But not only the book, the Mayans themselves are hiding, and their culture is under threat. The *Popol Vuh* had created a world, describing the process by which important places within it were named. That world, the world *of* the *Popol Vuh*, has changed: it is no longer there to be seen.

To sum up: I've been trying to arrive at a concept of world literature that would evade some of the critique traditionally launched against world literature's aspiration to totality by understanding it in a restricted sense as literature for the world, adopted and made by the world, oriented towards the world market, and oriented towards *this* world rather than the next while remaining non-committal with respect to literature's possible other-worldliness; finally, world literature foregrounds the world-creation power of literature, which is expressed in world creation myths but also whenever literature presents a world *as* world. This definition is both conceptual and also practical, arising both from an analysis of the history of the term

"world literature" as well as from my work on the *Norton Anthology* and my classroom experience. It is, to be sure, an incomplete definition, but then again incompleteness is and remains one of the fundamental characteristics of world literature. It is a characteristic that we should accept as one of its most salient features.

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# 27
# THE CANON(S) OF WORLD LITERATURE

*Peter Carravetta*

Although the actual roots of the word canon are obscure, scholars believe it is a Sumerian concept with parallels in Babylonian/Assyrian *kannu* and Semitic *kaneh*, indicating "a measuring rod" (Ezekiel 40:5). In the ancient Greek, *kanōn* means "a standard or norm by which all things are judged or evaluated, whether the perfect form to follow in architecture or sculpture or the infallible criterion (*kritērion*) by which things are to be measured" (McDonald 2007: 38–39). I single out this definition because it alerts us to the concomitant idea of *criterion*, present already in Epicurus (341–270 BCE), who wrote *Of the Standard, a Work Entitled Canons* (*Peri Kritēriou ē Kanōn*), and implicitly reminds us that with the establishment of the standard goes the necessity to exercise critique. This key term in Greek (*krinein*) is usually rendered as "to judge," which entails the identification of the proofs in jurisprudence before judgment is passed, in a sense determining what the standard is, what is right and what is wrong. It also extends to medicine, as in the determination of the symptoms of a disease. In the same semantic field we find the Latin word *cernere*, which in agriculture means the activity of separating the wheat from the chaff (Starobinski 1970: 114), and from which we derive the English verb "to discern." The polyvalent notion of determining what is right, or just, or proper, subsequently took shape as an icon, a rule, a practice or even a myth, against which to determine what is worthy of conservation and circulation for the collective memory and, conversely, what was deemed acceptable to be excluded, left by the wayside, or ignored at a particular juncture in the life of a given culture.

There have always been fierce battles between competing canons, since antiquity, as the case of the Bible makes patent (McDonald 2007, Levinson 2003). And it is no different today, where different splinter groups, recently emerged, vie for inclusion into what constitutes a common Hebrew canon (Levy 2009). It took centuries for the texts of Western monotheism to coalesce into a stable Text, the *Septuagint*, a canon that is now closed, with its writings assumed to have come from, or to have been revealed by, God. They are not subject to change or criticism, only to interpretation of possible latent meanings according to the *regula fidei*, or canon of faith, similar to what we call "in the spirit of the letter," a critical attitude which has been extended

to such disparate texts as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the Constitution of the United States of America. Thus the sacred text, of any culture, tends to become authoritative, or a *norma normata*, having achieved a fixed shape, and is ideally unchangeable. What bears on our discussion is, rather, the function these "eternal" texts exercise on succeeding generations, as they inscribe a process and its protocols, or a *norma normans* (McDonald 2007: 56), whereby all extra-canonical texts about the primary text constitute the tradition which becomes authoritative for the community. Referred to as hermeneutics, this process of interpretation has long been associated with paradigmatic authorities, ranging from Philo (25 BC–50 AD) to Schleiermacher (1768–1834). The interpretive tradition that these prototypical figures of interpretation exemplify has developed techniques of reading that have by and large condensed around the figure of allegory, or the search for hidden meanings.

Applied to secular texts, this process makes the *norma normans* the real issue, for the "normatizing" and therefore perennially homogenizing (and/or "nationalizing") process is now compounded by the presence of the author as a fallible human being subject to the vagaries of time and place. Still, we must recognize that a canon becomes central to establishing the identity of a people and, more to the point, the specific values – be they aesthetic, ethic, political – which the given community refers to in determining whether a particular text functions constructively, albeit subtly coercively, within or outside the community. The history of nationalisms and nation building bears this out spectacularly, as the processes of codification of specific texts which occurred in the nineteenth century as European and South American countries became formally independent nation-states are typically reproduced, *mutatis mutandis*, in post-World War II Africa. A canon, then, clearly exercises a *legitimizing* and a *censorship* function, even while it constantly generates one or several splintered anti- or extra-canonical "minor" or "marginal" textualities.

In this context, Italian literary history can furnish us with an exemplary case in point. Under the influence of philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), the canon of Italian literature was required to meet the standards of his particular brand of idealism and historicism. Despite some variations and elaborations, for over six decades the literary canon systematically kept out of the schools texts identified with movements of the avant-garde and social realism. This situation lasted until the second half of the twentieth century, when various Marxist, neo-Marxist and structuralist approaches opened up to a broader range of authors and perspectives (Carravetta 2005). Most recently, the Italian literary canon is facing the difficulty of dealing with textualities produced in Italian by authors who come from as far away as Senegal, Iraq, Argentina, and the Philippines. More than that, attempts are underway to minimize the attachment to (northern) Europe and explore the long-ignored impact of the Mediterranean world (Gnisci 2001).

The creation of a single canon of world literature, however circumscribed, cannot realistically be construed, although critics have at different times essayed to do precisely that, inevitably starting from within one national perspective. Insofar as literature is concretely made up of words which are always given in specific languages, one must immediately ask: in *which* language is the canon cast, from within what tradition, and in terms of *what kind* of relationship to the collective memory of a group, a people, or a nationality is it built upon? These questions elicit the further

critical question: what is the proper, or at least suggested, itinerary through this canon? In different ways, and with a transnational sensibility, both Jean Starobinski (1970) and Edward Said (1983) have drawn attention to this critical issue, namely: in the name of what values, aesthetic or otherwise, and in view of what social purposes, is a canon authorized, or become authoritative enough, to select and propose its "best" or "great" books such as to claim world-wide resonance or viability? A discussion on canons must from the very start set in motion a methodology that accounts for the social and ideological position of the critic, the specificity of the text, and the circumscribed environment in which they interact.

A salutary reminder for students and readers at large is that they are always reading and therefore interpreting a work from a very specific socio-historical location in the world. Critics have long recognized that we interpret from the point of view of the present, *our* present, and it is only through a second process that one can claim to understand how, for instance, Montesquieu interpreted Persian culture *as if* the following two centuries had not occurred. That task, which is carried out through exegesis, is still in the end brought to bear on our present, where one might conceivably ask: to what degree does the Enlightenment conception of Eastern cultures contribute to our present conceptions of the East? This line of reasoning has been amply explored in postcolonial studies, and is responsible in part for relaunching the question of the validity of any one canon.

We thus introduce students and other readers to a set of interconnected problems which bear upon our inevitable involvement in the text that we happen to be discussing: historical relativity, the multiplicity of interpretations, and the necessity to place the ideas, symbols, and suggestions that arise during the reading in the mental encyclopedia we happen to bring to class on any given occasion. Inevitably, then, we seek an understanding in view of *our* social reality, *our* world. A world, once again, which is not an ideal or universal bubble but, in the case of myself and my students, a twenty-first-century Anglophone and urban society with a particular geo-history that cannot be confused with the collective memory of someone who lives in Iran or China. Even the very medium, the material support of the text, is often radically alien from what some readers might be accustomed to (see Kirby in this volume). One need only recall that for extended periods of time, from antiquity and often down to our own age, literature has been written literally in stone, on wax tablets, on papyri, in different alphabets, handed down orally, and most recently may exist only in electronic format.

Here, translation itself becomes a topic of analysis, spurring reflection on the role it has played over time in determining the modes of transmission and incorporation of literary works in the weave of canons from different countries, across continents and centuries (see Venuti in this volume). We must confront the fact that, by and large, the majority of students cannot realistically be expected to read canonical works, however defined, from other cultures in the original languages, and that therefore their interrelation with the literary text must occur in a translation. The question of the relationship of the literary text to the literacy of the intended audience plays into social and pedagogical specificities and language registers of the society of provenance of the text as well as those of the target language (Guillory 1995: 238, 241). One need only recall that classics such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Dante's

*Divine Comedy*, and the Bible have become standard bearers of world literature in translation, in fact through numerous translations and redactions within the same national language. Thus the question that canon formation compels one to ask is: why is a given, and to all effects "foreign," work translated, and how is it presented to a specific society, to us? Who translated it and when? And how does it compare/contrast with works written by, say, a writer of one's own country and deemed important in the receiving culture at this juncture in time? And what supporting materials help to explain the relevance of this particular canonical import?

These considerations lead us to confront, at both the theoretical and the pragmatic levels, the issue of the definition of literature itself. A proven approach is to draw up a list of features, or qualities, which a literary work is traditionally expected to embody. The discussion about whether literature represents in various guises universal or eternal values has a very long and tormented history. We have all been exposed to certain notions which have themselves become canonical at different periods in history. These include: literature is essentially an aesthetic construct, or it embodies the spirit of the people, or is concerned with humanity's tragic destiny, or represents the story of freedom, or what lasts in a transient world. Each of these ideas, however, implies a metaphysical assumption about reality itself, one which cannot be ignored (Carravetta 1996, Anderson and Zanetti 2000: 341). The emergence and great influence in Euro-American academic and literary groups of post-colonial studies, feminisms, ethnic studies, and neo-historicism has had a salutary impact in cutting down to size the notion of a canon with a capital C which pretended to speak for the whole of humanity, and has introduced texts previously ignored or literally expunged from reading and publishing lists.

An unintended consequence of this ideological swerve, however, is that there is now a generation, perhaps two, which has never read Percy Shelley or Victor Hugo or Thomas Mann. In the case of Hugo, for example, it is important to know that if we wish to understand the evolution of the French literary canon, he sits at the juncture between romanticism and nationalism, and that Baudelaire's early career was marked by what Harold Bloom would call the "anxiety of influence" vis-à-vis this literary giant. One need only re-read Hugo's *Contemplations* (1855) to assess the range and breadth of this monumental figure. This was a time when poets in countries such as Italy, France, England, and by extension in some of the newly independent countries such as Greece, Argentina, and Mexico, were considered *vates*, prophets and speakers of and for the people of that particular country. Their inclusion in a world literary canon would have to downplay their more "nationalistic" texts and emphasize their more "universal" themes. But as claims to universality have in recent history also been considered, if not ethnocentric, then certainly Eurocentric, some formerly canonical authors – such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Alfred (Lord) Tennyson, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Theodore Dreiser, and Émile Zola – have faded from our attention.

This situation may be seen as symptomatic of how a canon, and a universalist world canon in particular, changes over time and not only functions as analogue to internal, national traditions, but also supports and exemplifies concerns which the previous generations did not and could not have. A case in point is the appropriation and institutionalization of the Classics from antiquity. There have been distinct

periods in which a culture has turned back to ancient times in order to construe literary values for its present and future generations. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Italian humanism rediscovered, translated, and set as canonical standards texts from the Greek and Roman traditions. Literature here was conceived not only as a strictly literary and aesthetic model, but as an ethical and civic one as well. This process established the premises for what would become the "quarrel between ancients and moderns" in the following century, as European cultures dealt with the stimuli coming from interfaith clashes, growing secularization, the opening up of the "New World," and the nascent scientific revolutions. There were of course occasional radical voices that reached beyond the Greco-Roman *oekumene*, such as Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), who would have wished to include in his syncretic canon texts from Persia, the Hittites, the Chaldeans, the Sumerians, the Alexandrians, and so on. Similarly, during the heyday of Romanticism, it was the medieval texts which were the rage and influenced to no small degree the values, the styles, and the ideologies of the early nineteenth century. The rise of the novel during the Enlightenment period displaces the epic to some extent, allowing for various levels of subjectivity to be explored in more detail and draw attention to the contemporary as opposed to the perennial. The question is crucial when dealing with literatures from countries which did not have a parallel evolution in this particular genre, once again placing the onus on the critic who wishes to offer a representative palette of the prose production in various extra-European contexts.

During the epoch of nation building, the Classics were reintroduced and interpreted in terms of what they said about nationalistic tenets, such as love of country, language, territory, allegiance to the people – *das Volk*, *el pueblo*, *la raza*, *il popolo*. Here again one might find such concerns in the literature produced in countries which achieved statehood only in the twentieth century. Much more all-encompassing were the ideologies behind the grand projects ushered in by Columbia and Harvard universities in the 1920s and 1930s, though retrospectively one would be hard put to find sustained references to texts such as the *Ramayana*, *Sundiata*, *The Song of Igor's Campaign*, or the *Norse* eddas. Yet, despite these constant revisions and often profound revolutions, clearly a world literature canon remained essentially a Eurocentric canon until well into the 1970s (see Puchner in this volume).

Given the present state of the world as marked by globalization, the internet, porous borders, and the waning distinction among disciplines, political ideologies, and indeed between fact and fiction, the national literature canon has been challenged. As a result there is an emphasis on a transnational and transhistorical process of formation and reformulation in which subjectivities are transacted and languages, value systems, and specific codes remapped. A similar position has been advanced by Matthew Potolski (2006: 216), who goes on to argue that what need to be introduced into any notion of a canon are "dispersed, cosmopolitan, and self-selected" communities no longer anchored in the dominant triad of race, geography, and language. We might add, in view of the past three or four decades, that there is less support today for the multiculturalist claim that every culture or subgroup must necessarily be validated under the aegis of a vague egalitarian world view, needing to be represented in the spectrum of, say, American or British literature as the

mainstream norm or *metron* of validation. The reason is that this notion of challenging and redrawing the canon essentially plays by the same rules, and in a sense obeys the same process. Vindicating a rhetoric of "we were here too," this approach may have had its reason for being during the Cold War years, where much revisionism took center stage, but in the twenty-first century seems to have lost its edge. Paul Lauter has convincingly argued that the multicultural paradigm is being replaced by "immigration shock," (Lauter 2010: 108) suggesting that it may be time to recalibrate the measuring rods implicit in canon formation.

A canon of world literature must reflect on this critical paradigm shift. Perhaps the concerns of identity ought to shift not to difference but to multiplicity, to hybridity, and in more practical terms, given the role of translation as an encounter, to content, to processes of assimilation, and to variable modes of relation. A conceptual and ideological transformation of a world literature canon occurs when, besides the introduction of previously unknown or ignored texts, the texts of the established canon are reinterpreted in view of a different set of issues. A text such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest* not only shows power relations between ruler and subjects, but also the early manifestation of a colonial attitude toward non-European peoples. Studies in early modern European literatures have amply demonstrated the heterogeneous, multilayered presence of subjects which embody *avant la lettre* the condition of hybridity, dotted as they are with mestizos, mulattoes, creoles, and other multiracial, multi-ethnic characters. In this sense, a world literature canon has always existed, though it has not always been visible under the screening protocols of a national or even nationalistic literature.

A world literature canon could well begin with travel narratives and focus on travel itself, on how notions of origins and authenticity have been no more than transactional categories which *homo viator* has used as symbolic currency. Travel – of ideas, texts, values, ultimately people – ought not be considered a mere genre among others, but as an underlying modality of human existence itself. Only recently construed as a critical concept whose application extends beyond its use in economics and sociology, migration lends itself to the study of the transmission of texts and their metamorphoses through time and place, for "migration is the engine of history" (Carravetta 2004). Focusing on the different types of travelers who have criss-crossed the planet, one finds not only the more studied exiles, work migrants, refugees, and expatriates, with all the symbolisms they imply. One would find also explorers, missionaries, conquerors, escapees, spies, evacuees, soldiers, diplomats, reporters, Roma, vagabonds, traditional nomads, and so on. As literary characters, these travelers highlight a variety of interactions among languages and peoples, ethical values and world views. One has to go beyond the formula "migration literature," which would consign certain texts to a typology wherein we can read of a negotiation between two locales, or focus on the inner drama of a character who has been uprooted and now must find some substitute real or ideal land to recompose an identity of sorts. The suggestion being made here is that literature itself, and world literature in particular, is, at bottom, an experience of migration, that is to say, of transposition, a moving from place to place linguistically, existentially, socially. The traveler brings worlds together, or at least links them within a more fluid conception of the one planet we inhabit.

The notion that literature as migration is most apt at creating or recreating a world canon draws strength from the fact that during the past several decades avant-garde texts have been more widely accepted, fueling much of that amorphous notion of the postmodern which critics still grapple with. Equally, the notion of the literary itself has been expanded and made more malleable, receptive to forms which older canonical ideas would have excluded. In other words, besides poems, plays, and novels, today we include texts written in various vernaculars, transcribed oral literature, biographies and autobiographies, memoirs, historical documents, hypertexts, and a variety of travelogues. The idea is to make the inevitably censoring function of canon formation not a tool for literary ideologies of inclusion and exclusion, but rather a compass for selected itineraries ever open to engage the texts which literally and metaphorically speak a different language, manifest forms utterly new to us, and compel a humbling self-critique. Depending on where one is located on the globe, a good collection of travel literature can set the premises for itineraries at various levels, allowing for landings which can permit the retrieval of texts from lesser-known cultures, and emphasize the transmission of ideas and values which literature always bears along. A focus on traveling texts can allow for the relaunching of a classic, as well as for the introduction of a masterwork into a different culture where it might plant new roots or graft itself onto previously unquestioned or ossified productions. Owen Lattimore's old anthology *Silk, Spices and Empire* (1968), for example, contains excerpts not only from Ptolemy and Pliny, but also and most importantly from writers from "the other side," as it were, who were cultural mediators in their countries, such as Chang Ch'in, Ch'ang Ch'un and Ibn Battuta. Grounded on need, desire, and the lure of the different and the distant, this literature makes the entire world – or at least that huge section of it which extends some 4,000 miles across what today would be several countries – the locus of its existence and exchange, offering a window into radical cultural diversity, intertwined ideologies and transient commonalities.

With this new orientation, which implicitly includes translation and the crossing of a variety of social borders and epistemological frontiers, we may then seek to locate the existence of world canons lodged already within national literatures. Here, one could profitably take inspiration from the study of pre-modern societies through that masterwork which is Ernst Robert Curtius' *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948), where notions of topics, rhetoric, metaphorics, philosophy, and symbolism become the key elements to map out and interpret the endless interpenetration of societal values above and beyond (and before) national literatures and ethnicities. An important factor here is to think of literature as a rhetorical construct which speaks *about*, and relates *to*, non-literary concerns. As such, literature both represents and creates worlds, suggesting alternative modes of understanding. To stay with the present, Richard Perez, for example, has persuasively argued that Latino/a Literary Theory has, over the course of several decades, "invented new modes of imagining the American experience," reminding us "of the limits and possibilities of American democracy" (Perez 2010: 299). A similar position has been argued for African American literature already since the 1970s, where the contribution of religious, political, and musical values to the American canon extends its roots across the Atlantic, and not just to Africa. In this sense, a world

canon links attitudes and perspectives which are no longer that distant in time and space or, and most importantly, that "foreign."

The notion of "traveling theory" (Said, 1983) is already available to strengthen this view. In fact, all national literatures ought to be rethought in this way. To give but an example, the critic who wishes to include writers such as Adonis, Elias Khoury, Naguib Mahfouz, and others whose original language is Arabic would have to contextualize in part the fact that these writers before they become accessible in English have struggled within their national or pan-national canons to revitalize their vernacular and were caught in the throes of parallel, but not identical, processes of canon formation and reformulation. Arabic literature has long been canonized under the aesthetic value of *adab*, a term that includes *belles-lettres*, but which for centuries has also meant educational literature, propriety, *Bildung*, even "*humanitas*." Clearly, here the aesthetic and the ethic were interwoven, and literature was presumed to touch upon the "spiritual." But, under successive stages of globalization, writers have been exposed to multiple non-Arabic forms of thinking and writing, and the national canons have had to make adjustments. One need only think of the huge influence of Persian and, later, Turkish literature. Once again, translation surges to the forefront as a key element in the establishment of any canon, whether national or world. The latest stage of Arabic literature, writes Nadia Al-Bagdadi, is characterized by "dispersion," (2008: 451) and issues of intertextuality, migration, and reconceptualization of any value expressed in the writing itself demand new critical approaches, a different hermeneutics of culture.

A world canon can therefore be reconstructed in any given semester by a critic/ educator who rests for a while in the oasis of the classroom, sets up a flexible methodology, and directs his or her students toward endless heterologies and possibilities of understanding, none of which is or can ever be the last word.

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# 28
# THE GREAT BOOKS

*John T. Kirby*

Language functions as a reflex of power as well as of knowledge. When language is manifested in the writing of books, both knowledge and power are at stake, and in evidence. This is one fundamental reason why the very topic of "great books" stirs such contestation, controversy, and even conflict. Knowledge is at stake, because some find it just as impossible to judge what are the "great" books as others find that adjudication simple and obvious. And power is also at stake, because the very adjudication so often functions as an exercise of intellectual and social control, rather than as a pure or disinterested designation of quality.

Beyond this, the notion of "greatness" itself is not a simple one to construe. In what does greatness consist? In content, or in form, or some combination of both? And if in content, is the principal criterion aesthetic or moral – or both? If in form, is the aesthetic completely outside the realm of the moral? The problems proliferate even as we contemplate them. There will be those who rally round each of the banners in this dispute. And perhaps because language lies so close to the heart of what it means to be human, feelings on the topic run extraordinarily high; and judgments about a person's taste or even his character may be made upon his opinions regarding greatness in literature. So the matter is particularly fraught.

But before we can go much further, it is worth defining some of the terms that are inevitably used in such discussions. They are words that may beguile us with their apparent simplicity, but, like all monumental words – God, time, love, being, self, life, to name only a few others – they are wrapped in manifold layers of meaning. Perhaps we can unravel some of them a bit.

### Literature, text, reading

The most astonishing definition I have ever encountered of the word "literature" was four words long: "the record of culture." The person who proffered this definition found herself immediately challenged by others in the room: Isn't that impossibly diffuse and flexible? Doesn't such a broad definition leave the category open to such "records of culture" as the local telephone book? But she was adamant: the telephone book, as a record of culture, is absolutely to be considered as "literature." She intended the breadth and radicality of this definition, by their stunning

iconoclasm, to democratize and refresh the category: to open new vistas of possibility and to sweep aside previous criteria, which she considered superannuated and needlessly restrictive.

Those previous criteria were long entrenched, and, despite some attenuation, they still remain considerably so. Western culture has fairly recently emerged from a long era in which the word "literature" was unquestionably synonymous with "*belles lettres*," written language composed (whether in prose or verse) as high art. As such, it was regarded as both the purview and the signifier of the elite classes. It was seen as one of the principal foci of the educated person, and those who could compose it with skill in form or content (or both) were held as artists of the highest order.

This connection with education goes back to ancient times. Recent studies estimate that literacy rates in the ancient Mediterranean world were extremely low, so the ability to read and write was within the grasp of only a small minority of the ancients (Harris 1989). Moreover, persons not belonging to the elite classes have almost always had restricted leisure time, so the lengthy project of learning to read and enjoy sophisticated texts was perforce restricted principally to those who did not have to work for a living. Indeed, the ancient Greek word for "leisure," *skholê*, is the source of our words "school" and "scholar."

As time marched toward modernity, many factors conspired to raise literacy levels in the West – among them the spread of democratic ideals and the proliferation of technology. The spread of movable-type printing roughly coincided with the recovery of Greek classical learning in Western Europe, and each served to promote the other: meanwhile, various versions of Protestant Christianity emphasized the importance of common people's having ready access to vernacular translations of the Bible. So both sacred and secular texts were being disseminated at previously unimaginable rates. This phenomenon in turn must have stimulated an unprecedented interest in gaining literacy.

With the eighteenth-century Enlightenment came a new-found reliance upon the sensory manifold as the only reliable mediator between the mind and the phenomenal universe. This served to underscore the role of the secular mind in evaluating moral and religious as well as aesthetic criteria, which in turn enabled ever greater proportions of the population to disengage themselves from the behavioral strictures of religious authority of every stripe. With this burgeoning secularization of Western culture came much broader exposure to all sorts of art (and "literature" was still in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regarded as an "art" in the elite sense).

The twentieth century saw the dawning of a new sense of free rein with regard to the old standards of what constituted art and beauty. New experimental forms in both verse and prose spread in a number of Western languages, and this break with tradition opened the floodgates of possibility for drastically different conceptualizations of what the term "literature" might mean. But, for the most part, these innovations were still being practiced by academics and other members of the cultural and social elite. They laid the groundwork for, but did not immediately ratify or incorporate, truly "popular" forms of literature under the same canopy of legitimacy as the traditional (elite) forms.

This trend continued well into the late twentieth century, as academic fields such as Cultural Studies consciously moved toward legitimizing the study of such media

as the "zine," hip-hop graffiti, and other vernacular art forms. The provocative aesthetic entailed in these has often brought with it, or at least implied, a comparable radical politics, which perhaps contributes to the slowness with which such innovations are embraced by elite institutions. At the time of this writing (2010), despite considerable cross-exposure, there does not appear to have been a far-reaching (genuine) homogenization of elite and popular cultures – neither as regards the art forms themselves, nor as regards the nomenclature of forms such as "literature."

The word "literature" has as its etymon the Latin term *litterae*, "letters" (sc. of the alphabet) – which more than implies a *written* verbal text. If that criterion is accepted from the start, it will largely exclude from the category of "literature" such art forms as the comic strip, the graphic novel, and the cinema. Whether that is a reasonable exclusion is a topic that has spawned the writing of many books, and will doubtless spawn more; we cannot begin to do the question justice here. But, as we have indicated, it is worth remembering that, to some of those to whom the question matters most, the boundaries of the category "literature" are anything but clearly delineated. For that matter, the word "text" itself is no longer univocal.

If we set aside for the moment the definition of "literature," and provisionally accept the definition of "text" as "anything that can be read," then it remains for us to define the act of "reading." In the same provisional spirit we might set aside the conventional definition of "reading" – as visually scanning words on a page in order to understand their meaning – and instead reconceive the word so as to designate, more broadly, "inspection and interpretation" – and indeed this broader metaphoric sense of the word is already gaining more and more currency. If we do so reconceive it, then the category of "text" (as "something that can be 'read'") becomes elastic enough to include all the media we have mentioned so far, and not just the printed verbal text. This in turn enables us to broaden the category of "literature" to include, if not also the telephone book, at least other forms of artistic production that may be "textualized" in this broader sense – forms that, moreover, seem to have an ever-deepening kinship with "literature" in the most traditional sense.

In the meantime, it is also worth remembering that a radical broadening of the category does not in itself dispense with hierarchies of value, of canons – or of greatness.

## Books

Even if we bracket the vexed question of "literature" and restrict ourselves to the question of "great books," we must not ignore this next fundamental question: what is a "book"?

For the period prior to the rise of digital technology, this much at least we can answer clearly, with reference to history. (For much general information on this topic see Diringer 1953/1982; Reynolds and Wilson 1968/1991). The technology of writing spread widely around the Mediterranean basin during the seventh through the fourth centuries BCE, and continued to develop considerably thereafter. But in the Levant it had by that time already seen centuries of extensive use. Early inscriptions – necessarily limited by virtue of the actual physical difficulties involved – were

executed on stone; somewhat easier to produce, but still cumbersome, heavy, and bulky, were clay tablets such as those on which the earliest Mesopotamian poems were recorded (our oldest samples date from the late third and early second millennia BCE; Dalley 1991). As technologies of writing propagated information, the need arose for improved information storage and retrieval technologies as well. Here the Egyptians played a central role. They were inventing and producing papyrus writing surfaces at around the same time; our earliest extant papyrus document dates to perhaps 2600 BCE (Kenyon 1899). This commodity became increasingly interesting to neighboring Mediterranean cultures as time went on, and the production and export of papyrus became an important source of revenue for Egypt as the demand increased.

Papyrus plants may grow to a height of ten feet or more. The process of turning them into a writing-surface was described by Pliny the Elder in his *Historia naturalis* (13.74–82): the long fibrous stalks were separated into strips and glued together on a board; a second "ply" was added crosswise, to give sturdiness; and the sheets were dried, trimmed, and joined into a single, continuous long sheet that was then rolled up into a scroll or *uolumen* (the source of our word "volume"). The scroll, then, was the item first described as what we might call a "book" in antiquity (the Greek word for "book," *biblion*, comes in fact from one of the Greek words for papyrus: *biblos*). Thus it made sense to speak of the "twenty-four books of the *Iliad*" because, once committed to writing, the text of Homer's poem filled twenty-four scrolls of papyrus.

Papyrus was not the only writing surface developed in antiquity: the ancients also discovered that the treated and scraped skins of various domesticated quadrupeds – calfskin and sheepskin were particularly favored for this – offered a very smooth, and sometimes sumptuous, surface for writing. By the first century BCE, the use of such skins (known as parchment or vellum, whether with reference to their animal source or to their level of quality) was beginning to rival the use of papyrus. This may have had an effect on the development of a new physical format for the "book," which also rivaled and eventually displaced the technology of the scroll. The new format, known in Latin as the *codex*, was made from pages sewn together along a spine – the format we still use for printed books today. Its advantages over the *uolumen* were immediately obvious: it could be made of animal-skin pages as easily as of papyrus, and its physical form and durability made it easier to manipulate and preserve; but, more importantly, it made the consultation of text at the very end of the book just as easy as consulting the first page. In other words, its tremendous superiority as an information storage and retrieval device made it inevitably more desirable to readers. After the development and proliferation of the *codex*, the next major step in technology was the replacement of papyrus and animal-skin pages with paper, a material being developed in China in the four centuries surrounding the turn of the Common Era (Needham/Tsien 1985), but introduced to the West by Muslim Arabs in the centuries following (Al-Hassani et al. 2006/2007).

This artifact – the codex printed on paper – remains the item that even today comes first to mind when we speak of "the book." While e-book devices such as the Kindle, the Nook, and the iPad are today gaining greatly in popularity, they have a long way to go before completely displacing the printed codex, which has a

tactile and visual aesthetic appeal to it, as well as not requiring electrical power to operate it.

The mention of such e-book technology prompts us to consider what we may be willing to include under the symbolic rubric of the "book": a blog consulted on the internet, an MP3 recording of a novel, listened to on a portable media player? In a daring new millennium we may decide that we want to extend the term "text" to cover "anything that is read"; but in that case, we must revisit the question of what counts as "reading." Shall we include the viewing of visual media such as television programs or paintings, the act of listening to a musical performance, live or recorded? These expanded definitions of "reading" and "text" might, if thoughtlessly applied, serve only to muddy the waters further; but if they are carefully considered, they could help to greatly expand our understanding of this captivating and vital activity (which itself brings understanding and knowledge as well as pleasure and diversion) in ways not otherwise possible.

## Canons

Our word "canon" comes from the Greek *kanōn*, meaning a measuring-stick. This metaphor of appraisal and assessment reminds us that the notion of canonicity entails a standard of requirements. The most obvious, and surely the commonest, form of canon is one based on some idea of "bestness": the canon is, essentially, a list of items that represent the best in their class or category. (The formation and ratification of a religious canon of "scripture" may be viewed, by believer and skeptic alike, as the limiting case of canon making.)

Canon making of all sorts has been extensively criticized, even deplored, in recent decades. Despite that fact, it seems that the practice is one to which humans are particularly addicted. We are, it would seem, canon-making creatures. From the *New York Times* Bestseller List to the *Guinness Book of World Records* to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to the Oscars, we must and will have our canons; and they are typically founded, as we have said, upon some notion of "bestness."

It appears that there are two basic tendencies entailed in this sort of structuring of human knowledge (here I am borrowing some material from Kirby 1998). The first tendency, the *aggregative*, may best be represented by the production of encyclopedias. This practice is itself an ancient one; we see it evinced in Pliny the Elder's massive (and endlessly entertaining) *Historia naturalis*, cited earlier. More modern examples include the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The second tendency, the *selective*, focuses not on inclusivity but rather on exclusivity. It is true that the making of any list that does not pretend to completeness is by nature exclusionary, and that when time and space are limited, the inclusion of this author or title means that that one must be left out.

In the formation of literary canons, these aggregative and selective tendencies are attended upon by a number of interactive phenomena, including what we may call *judgment*, *preservation*, and *reproduction*. By "judgment" I mean the evaluation of whether a text is worth particular attention, and its selection on that basis. By "preservation" I mean the decision to retain a selected text for re-reading; by

"reproduction" I mean the publication and dissemination of texts that have been preserved in the sense just explained. The salient question in connection with all three of these phenomena is why such actions are taken. (For more on literary canons see, especially, Guillory 1995.)

Canons are also a way of organizing categories, of trying to cope with the mass of undifferentiated phenomena that come our way each day. The more one cares about texts, the more one is likely to accumulate them; and as accumulation proliferates, the need to organize and sort and prioritize becomes increasingly important – again, because of time and its ever-decreasing supply in any given lifetime. So we categorize to help ourselves make sense of the world around us (Lakoff 1987). Moreover, these canonical categories prove useful not only to each individual as an individual reader, but also to communities as social bodies: they offer "measuring sticks" whereby groups of humans can calibrate their value systems, each individual against the corporate whole, and derive a sense of belonging and shared values and beliefs – or react against those of the group, thereby delineating individuality. (For more on interpretive communities, see, e.g., Fish 1982.) So canons function as ways of appropriating the phenomenal universe, ways of formulating our own value systems, and – through such appropriation and formulation – finally also ways of measuring our sense of self and self-esteem.

The first sentence of Jeanette Winterson's memorable *Written on the Body*, "Why is the measure of love lost?" (Winterson 1992), poignantly captures one of the crucial issues in the study of classical literatures in the modern world: over time, things get lost. To the extent that we have any power to control or minimize loss, we are naturally going to focus first on the most important, the most precious – the best things. And when something precious is partially or substantially lost, we are naturally going to have a heightened sense of the value of what is retained. Indeed it was the substantial (in some cases total) loss, and then recovery (in many cases only partial or even fragmentary), of the classical Greek and Latin texts that underscored their preciousness to Western culture. But the concept of literary canons dates back to antiquity itself (O'Sullivan 1997): lists of the "best" authors in various genres – the three tragic poets, the three comic poets, the two epic poets, the three iambic poets, the ten Attic orators – were in place by the Hellenistic period. As such, they constitute conscious gestures of what I call "classicism" (the appreciation, principally in the post-classical period, of artifacts considered to be "classics"). Such canon making has probably also influenced, in its turn, the continued preservation of texts from antiquity, on the basis of their perceived excellence and thus their abiding value: as so much has already been lost (so goes this logic), it is all the more important to hold fast to what is left.

## Classics, greatness

I have already referred more than once to the notion of excellence or "bestness" in literature – for that matter, in all art, in every human endeavor. I have also hinted at the topic of evaluating "classics" in this connection. But these terms, as much as any, beg for elucidation, and so we must turn our attention to them now.

The ancients understood their literary genres – not just oratory, but epic and lyric verse, tragic and comic drama, even history and philosophy – in essentially philosophical and rhetorical terms (Kennedy 1963, 1972, 1984, 1994). So it should not surprise us that the first writers to evaluate such genres were philosophers thinking about rhetoric (e.g. Plato, Aristotle), or rhetorical theorists thinking philosophically (e.g. Longinus). Depending on their proclivities, such thinkers will tend to emphasize form over content, or vice versa, or some combination of both; but in every case, their written evaluations were expected to make sense not just to the writer or to a single reader, but to some sort of "interpretive community" (in Fish's sense referred to above). In such cases the categories employed must be commonly shared by that interpretive community, be it a small coterie of like-minded individuals or an entire culture.

The word *classis*, which in early Latin had referred to "classes" or categories of citizenry, could by the time of Seneca the Younger (c. 3BCE–65CE) refer to "types" of people as categorized by their progress in gaining wisdom (*Epistulae morales* 75.8 ff., where the word is used as a synonym of *genus*, "kind"). By the second century CE, authors such as Marcus Cornelius Fronto and Aulus Gellius (see the latter's *Noctes atticae* 19.8.15) could use the term *scriptores classici* to denote writers whose Latin style was of the highest quality.

Such is the earliest genealogy of the concept of "classics" as a literary designation. In the centuries since Fronto and Gellius, however, the word has seen the accretion of considerably more nuanced meaning. In attempting to address the question "what is a classic?" in terms meaningful to readers at the turn of this new millennium, I have elsewhere (Kirby 2000: 132 ff.) proposed the following: 1. A classic is the best of its kind; 2. A classic has withstood the test of time; 3. A classic taps into the mythic values of its culture.

These criteria, I think, remind us of some (at least) of the most important contours along which the concept of "bestness" or "greatness" has been limned over the past few thousand years in the West. To the extent that I am correct in them, the notion of an "instant classic" will be not so much paradoxical as nonsensical: those who use the phrase probably intend either "succès d'estime" or "popular favorite." I leave room for the privileging of form over content, though I surmise that in most cases both will be at stake, with content perhaps receiving pride of place. And I acknowledge the primal importance of shared value systems within interpretive communities, for whom and among whom only can works designated "classics" be revered as such.

In ordinary terms, we readily make the connection between "classic" (as "the best of its kind") and "great." But this too may require further consideration. For one thing, it is possible that a work of art could be "great" without being the "best" in every way; it might indeed be deeply flawed in some respect, and still have great impact (for good or ill) on its culture. So, too, probably not every "great" work is a "classic." That said, there does appear to be a considerable, even pervasive degree of congruency among these three designations – "great," "best," and "classic."

## Great books

Perhaps we are now in a position to begin pondering the concept of "great books" as an evaluative and pedagogical category. We would do well to bear in mind that even

if the reader accepts my association of "greatness" with "classics," the terms "literature" and "book" (and thus also "reading") are still in play. But for most of the history of writing and reading (in the conventional/traditional senses of those words), the term "great books" would have been relatively unproblematic. What would *qualify* as a "great book" might be more problematic; the stock of almost every book goes up and down over time, and thus its inclusion in (or exclusion from) any particular canon is always in play as well. But this may tell us even more about the interpretive communities evaluating it than about the book itself. As Edmund White points out, books such as Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Howell's *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, all considered "unquestionably canonical" a few generations ago, are now very rarely read (White 1994). And yet their fortunes could change again tomorrow.

But given such vicissitudes of esteem, can "greatness" have any truly lasting meaning? How can such evaluative or pedagogical categories be invoked with any useful results? Empirically speaking, they tend to be applied in at least three different ways:

1. The hard-line "reader-response" approach inquires: "'Great' to whom?" In other words, the notion of greatness makes sense *only* within the context of an interpretive community. As that community metamorphoses or disappears, its canons may be altered – or may vanish entirely. And the more culturally distant one interpretive community is from another, the less sense the canons of one community will make to another. How many Americans, for instance, can recount even the roughest plot lines of *Dream of Red Mansions* or *Journey to the West*? And how many Chinese know the major characters involved in the Trojan-Horse narratives of the *Odyssey* or the *Aeneid*?
2. A less drastically subjective (but still far from universalizing) approach to canons would be to appreciate the fact that, as canon-making creatures, we do have lists of literary "classics," but also to acknowledge that such lists change over time. In this regard, the value of having a canon consists partly in the very discussion it engenders over what deserves to be included or excluded.
3. A third approach, at perhaps the opposite extreme from no. 1, is to insist on an enduring, immutable list of "classics" that can slowly be added to, as this or that item proves its worth over time, but should never be culled or winnowed. (The hardest-line version of this third approach would be to insist on an enduring, immutable list that can *not* be added to. But the interpretive community that could accept such a restrictive list, in perpetuity, for Western culture has dwindled to virtually nil.)

Given such vicissitudes, and given the inherent problems in determining "greatness," it may paradoxically turn out that the best way to manage such an important question in the coming century is to retain a class of professionals whose job it is to maintain expertise in these matters. I say "paradoxically" because, of course, we already have just such a class – the professoriate – whose very *raison d'être* is currently in question (see, e.g. Donoghue 2008). But if we can succeed in attracting to the professoriate good, intelligent, and generous individuals who will see their task

as a vocation valuable to society, then we may be able to foster that profession, not as an idle group of capricious mandarins, but as a class of responsible public servants whose service is valued and respected by society.

Though they may not always have been appropriately appreciated at the very moment of their labors, there have manifestly been such classes of professional in many times and places around the globe: the philosophical and political thinkers of fifth-century Athens; the Arab philosophers of medieval Spain; the dons of medieval Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Bologna; the humanists of the Italian Renaissance. But in addition to their goodness, their intelligence, and their generosity, such individuals must also be motivated by the conviction that there is such a thing as "greatness" or "bestness" in human endeavor; and that society is in critical need of their expert consultation as to these qualities. Their society must also be convinced that their presence and social function is indeed not otiose, but crucial to the full development of the next generation of citizens. If a society is convinced, in intellectual terms, that the healthy operation of the humanities as an academic discipline is not only non-optional, but actually central – to individual mental health, and eventually also to the health of that community – then such professionals as these will be able to do their work both conscientiously and efficaciously. Moreover, it would be difficult to envision a more momentous social context for "great books" than this.

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# 29
# BIBLIOMIGRANCY
## Book series and the making of world literature

*B. Venkat Mani*

### Introduction

In her acceptance speech of Der deutsche Friedenspreis (German Peace Prize, 2003), the celebrated US author Susan Sontag reflected on "The Fragile Alliance" between Europe and the United States. The prize, sponsored by the German Book Trade Association, recognizes the outstanding contribution of an author or scholar in promoting international cultural understanding. It is awarded every October at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the largest such fair in the world. For Sontag, literature becomes the glue that strengthens bonds between people across linguistic, geographical, and political boundaries. Literature has the capacity, she asserts, "to tell us what the world is like"; literature "can train, and exercise, our ability to weep for those who are not us and ours" (Sontag 2007: 205). Sontag illustrates her own literary training by reminiscing about books – especially by German authors – that she read growing up in Arizona and California as a third-generation American of Polish and Lithuanian descent:

> To have *access to literature, world literature*, was to escape the prison of national vanity, of philistinism, of compulsory provincialism, of inane schooling, of imperfect destinies and bad luck. Literature was the passport to enter a larger life; that is, the zone of freedom.
>
> (Sontag 2007: 209, emphasis added).

Sontag's assertion, which enhances the cosmopolitan ambition underlying the reading of world literature, cannot be dissociated from her point about *access* to literary works. The medium of dissemination of a literary work and one's accessibility to the medium remain crucial to world literature's multiple significations: a philosophical ideal, a mode of reading, a particular transnational arrangement of literary texts, or an instrument of international understanding.

In the moments of the "globalization" of the world through violent conquests, imperialism, and colonialism, all the way to modern-day interaction between nation-states through multinational commerce, the "worlding" of peoples has initiated and facilitated the "worlding" of literature. The dissemination of literary narratives

sometimes occurred through a privileging of the oral (*Kanthastha*, in the throat) over the written (*Granthastha*, in the book), as in the case of many Pali and Sanskrit texts towards the end of the first millennium BCE (Pollock 2006: 82). At other times, technologies of writing or visual media such as paintings played a pivotal role in the circulation, distribution, and reception of literary narratives. If clay tablets carried the first translations of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* from the Babylonians to the Hittites in the second millennium BCE (Damrosch 2008: 484), a book of Mughal miniatures entitled *Razmnama* (*The Book of War*, 1598–99) brought the text of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata* to Persia (Rice 2010: 125–31). The Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk's Turkish novel *Benim Adim Kirmizi* (1998) appropriates and translates the bi-medial (writing/painting) discourse of historical documentation dating back to 1258 CE (Kadir 2011: 41–63). The English translation, *My Name is Red*, 2001, published by New York-based Alfred A. Knopf, can be part of one's electronic library on a Kindle, Nook, or iPad.

The invention of Gutenberg's printing press in the fifteenth century and the advent of the "book" – a shorthand term that today is primarily used in reference to codices on vellum or paper – revolutionized the technology of information transfer (Febvre and Martin 1976; Brake 2001; see Kirby in this volume). Printed books were accumulated, circulated, and distributed in unprecedented numbers. With books, narratives travel, leaving old abodes, finding new homes on new shelves, entering and inhabiting the space of world literature. Publishers and booksellers who print and sell affordable books, literate citizens who acquire these books, and public libraries that make these books available to those who cannot afford to buy them collectively play a very important role in the "making" of world literature.

The "library" in its multiple meanings – as a house of books, a folio of titles, a publication series, collected works (Chartier 1994: 69–70), and more recently a digital repository (Darnton 2009; Mani 2011) – has played a significant role in the acquisition, distribution, and world-wide circulation of narratives. With changes in the medium, the very "mediality" – i.e. the composition and the definitive mode of media dissemination – of libraries changed, from the cuneiform tablet depositories patronized by King Ashurbanipal in the seventh century BCE, to the print collections of the Asiatic Society Library in Calcutta (established in 1784) and the Library of Congress in Washington DC (established in 1800); to book series such as Reclam's *Universal-Bibliothek* (launched in 1867 in Leipzig), the Modern Library (launched in 1917 in New York City), Penguin Classics (launched in 1946 in London), Heinemann's African Writers Series (launched in 1962 in London); and now the new digital libraries such as the European Library (TEL, launched in 2005 in The Hague) and the UNESCO-sponsored World Digital Library (launched in 2009 in Washington, DC). While ancient and medieval royal libraries were primarily meant for in-house use by select literate members of the ruling classes, monastic libraries functioned as storehouses for books as well as sites of book production through the enterprise of copying manuscripts. In addition, parallel to university libraries with restricted use for members of the university, the early nineteenth century saw an increase in the number of lending libraries (*Leihbibliotheken*), as well as other public libraries in European capital cities that were declared "National Libraries," which also

functioned as national archives (Harris 1995; Casson 2001). The mediality of each of these libraries is defined by the media available for circulation – while borrowing privileges of members of a city or a county library may include access to music CDs, DVDs, and even video games, university or national libraries may restrict the physical access to their holdings, or, as is happening more recently, digitize sections of their holdings for unrestricted (virtual) access. The latest station in the changing mediality of libraries is the mark of the twenty-first century, in which new "medial institutions" such as Google Books and reading media such as the Kindle, Nook, and iPad punctuate the literary landscape. We are living at a time when the book and the library – both as artifacts and as instruments of literacy – are exerting hitherto unprecedented influence on the field of literary studies. It seems imperative, therefore, to scrutinize transformations in print culture and their impact on one of the most important, most ancient, and arguably perhaps the most medial of all institutions that have had a very special affinity to the "worlding" of literature over the centuries: the library.

This essay locates world literature at the intersection of libraries, translations, and the publishing industry. I argue that specific moments of global print cultural history contribute to the "making" of world literature. A plethora of socio-economic, cultural, and political factors condition the production, translation, distribution, circulation, and reception of a literary work beyond the point of its linguistic and national origin. I will begin my discussion by highlighting the role of translations from non-European into European languages in two key moments that showcase the term *Weltliteratur* in the nineteenth century. Following a brief theoretical interlude, I will enter into a discussion of the twentieth century, focusing on three book series: Reclam's *Universal-Bibliothek*, Heinemann's African Writers Series, and the Modern Library.

## Publishing world literature

At the height of European colonialism in the nineteenth century, many literary works from Asia, Africa, and Latin America entered the global traffic of literature. With readerships beyond their points of origin – whether in the original languages of their composition, or in translations and adaptations – these narratives came to be recognized as "*Weltliteratur*." As Johann Peter Eckermann documented in his *Gespräche mit Goethe* (*Conversations with Goethe*, 1835), Goethe highlighted the term "*Weltliteratur*" – already used by August Wilhelm Schlegel in 1804 (Mommsen 1985: 25) – anticipating the arrival of the epoch of world literature through an engagement with that which is not one's own: the strange, the foreign. In Eckermann's entry from 31 January 1827, Goethe remarks that he is currently reading a "chinesischer Roman" (Chinese novel), the title of which remains unmentioned (Eckermann 1982: 196). Since the late nineteenth century, speculative discussions about the *exact* title of the novel have abounded the sub-field of "Goethe-Philology" within Germanistik, establishing *Hau-qiu zhuan* (German: *Haoh Kjöh Tschwen*) as the most likely title (Biedermann 1899; Chen 1933; Aurich 1935; Wagner-Dittmar 1971; Mommsen 1985; Debon 1985; for discussions within Chinese scholarship see Tsu in this

volume). Not all scholarly sources agree with this speculation. Hanns Eppelsheimer's authoritative *Handbuch der Weltliteratur* ("Handbook of World Literature" 1937, 1947, 1960) annotates *Yu Jiaoli* (German: *Yu Giaoli oder die Beiden Basen*) with the remark that "diese bescheidene Sittengeschichte" (this humble story of manners) is being included in the *Handbuch* only because of its "europäischen Rufes" (European fame); the readers are directed to Eckermann's *Gespräche* (Eppelsheimer 1960: 12). U.C. Fischer links *Chin Ku Chi' Kuan* (German: *Kin-ku-ki-kuan*) with Goethe's *Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahre-und Tageszeiten* (1827), claiming that an English translation of the novel was present in Goethe's library in Weimar (Fischer 1967: 31).

In most of these discussions, details of the content of the Chinese novel provided by Goethe: his mention of the moon, goldfish, "Rohrstühle" (sedan chairs), a couple in love, Chinese legends, and most importantly the specific comparative reference to his own novel *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797) (Eckermann 1982: 197) become conclusive evidence for detecting the title of the novel. Underlying these detections are expectations of exactitude from Eckermann who, in the foreword to *Gespräche*, categorically defies such expectations by stating that his book portrays "*mein* Goethe" (my Goethe, emphasis in the original), to the extent that he (Eckermann) "ihn [Goethe] aufzufassen und wiederzugeben fähig war" ("was able to perceive and depict him"; Eckermann 1982: 8).

Such expectations notwithstanding, Goethe's access to Chinese literary works reveals a larger network of works from Asia entering the European space in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whereby translators, publishing houses, and libraries play a significant role. *Goethes Bibliothek: Katalog* (1958), the comprehensive catalogue of the Goethe National Library in Weimar – including holdings from Goethe's private library as well as his father's library – documents titles of literary works in twenty languages, in original or in translation, that Goethe had acquired during his lifetime (Ruppert 1958: 109–255). Non-European works include Georg Forster's translation of Kalidasa's *Sakontala* (1791), Carl Wilhelm von Humboldt's *Bhagavad-Gita* (1826), and Joseph von Hammer Purgstall's translation, from Persian into German, of Shamsuddin Hafiz's poetic *Diwan* (1812–13) with which Goethe engaged in his own *West-östlicher Divan* (1814–19) (Ruppert 1958: 251–57). The *Katalog* does not mention a single work of Chinese literature, in original or in translation. However, it was the library of the Großherzogliche Haus Sachsen-Weimar (Grand Duchy of Saxony-Weimar) – today *Die Klassik Stiftung Weimar*, a UNESCO World Heritage institution – that made Goethe's access to Chinese literature possible. *Hao-qiu zhuan* was first translated into English by James Wilkinson (later edited by Thomas Percy) as *The Pleasing History* (1761); its translation into German by Christoph Gottlieb von Murr, *Haoh Kjöh Tschwen d. i. die angenehme Geschichte des Haoh Kjöh. Ein chinesischer Roman* (1766) makes a reference to the English title, and was published by the famous Johann Friedrich Junius Verlag. Wilhelm Grimm, in a letter to his brother Jakob, mentioned Goethe's reading from the novel in Heidelberg in 1815 (Boxberger 1880: 338; Debon 1985: 52). In the early twentieth century, a new German translation of *Hao-qiu zhuan* by the philologist Franz Kuhn appeared with Insel Verlag. The long title, *Eisherz und Edeljaspis oder Die Geschichte einer glücklichen Gattenwahl*: *ein Roman aus der Ming-Zeit* (literal translation: "Ice-Heart and the Royal Jasper or the Story of a Happy Choice of

Spouse: A novel from the Ming-Times") was perhaps meant to signal an improvement over von Murr's translation from English; Kuhn had translated the Chinese work into German. However, the translation bears no mention of von Murr. In his Afterword to the translation, Kuhn cites the passage on the Chinese novel from *Gespräche* to affirm the superiority of his translation over the "unzulänglich" (deficient/inadequate) French translation of the novel by Abel Rémusat that was purportedly available to Goethe in 1827. The French Sinologist Rémusat never translated *Hao-qiu zhuan*; he did translate *Yu Jiaoli* as *Ju-kiao-li, ou les deux cousines: Roman chinois* from Chinese into French. Published in Paris by Moutardier in 1826, Rémusat's *Ju-kiao-li* was indeed available at the Großherzogliche Bibliothek in Weimar. A German translation, *Ju-kiao-li, oder die beiden Basen: ein chinesischer Roman* (translator unknown) was published by Franckh, Stuttgart in 1827 (Weimarer Gesamtkatalog). As for *Chin Ku Chi' Kuan*, Eduard Griesbach's German translation was first published in 1880 as *Kin-ku-ki-kuan: neue und alte Novellen der chinesischen 1001 Nacht*, thus positioning the novel as the Chinese Alif Laila wa Laila for German readers. Unlike von Murr's reliance on Percy's English translation of *Hao-qiu zhuan*, Griesbach's translation did not rely on the first English translation of *Chin Ku Chi' Kuan*. In 1820, Peter Perring Thoms, an employee of the British East India Company stationed in Macau, had published *The Affectionate Pair, or The History of Sung-kin: A Chinese Tale* with the London-based publisher Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen (BKPA). In the early nineteenth century BKPA was the leading publishing house of books about and translations from the British colonies. Next to Perring's translation, BKPA published John B. Gilchrist's *The Stranger's Infallible East-Indian Guide* (1820), Charles Mills's *History of Mohammedanism* (1817), and held publishing rights to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1818 edition). In 1829, John Francis Davis published a new English translation of *Hao-qiu zhuan* as *The Fortunate Union: A Romance* with BKPA. Book-ended by *The Pleasing History* (1761) and *The Fortunate Union* (1829), Goethe's moment of giving traction to the term Weltliteratur from 1827 becomes part of a larger network of literary works that made their way to Europe in translation.

Books published by BKPA made their way into many private collections, but also public libraries such as the British Library – home and office to Karl Marx as he wrote *Das Kapital* (Capital, 1867). In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels speak of the impossibility of "national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness" through a "cosmopolitan consumption" of cultural goods, facilitated by the bourgeois world market (Marx 1993: 71). In articulating explicitly the connections between a world-wide market-place and world literature, Marx and Engels – unlike Goethe – do not refer to a specific text that emanates outside of the European cultural space. We do know (Prawer 1976; Baxandall and Morawski 1977) that Marx's own readings comprised literary and philosophical works from the Greek, French, Spanish, and English – many of them accessed at the British Library.

In short, the earlier phases of European colonial expansion inaugurate the appearance of important literary works on bookshelves and reading desks in faraway spaces, thereby – to use Goethe's phrase – hastening the advent of the epoch of world literature.

## Bibliomigrancy

Considering the material history of books and charting the transformations of libraries and print culture thus opens up world literature to new modes of inquiry. Literary propriety, systems of patronage of translation, class-based affiliations, and accessibility through literacy, publications, and library acquisitions thus become crucial to the construction and propagation of world literature.

To understand the significance of these ideas, let us briefly turn to Michel Foucault's idea of a library as a "heterotopia," and consider also the "inventory" of a "universal library" proposed by Roger Chartier. In his lecture "Of Other Spaces" (1986), Foucault mobilizes proximity *and* distance, adjacency *and* dispersion to index the narrative of space. Utopias thus become sites with no real place; heterotopias become the "Other" spaces of utopias: "effectively enacted utopias" (Foucault 1986: 24). Among the several heterotopias that Foucault discusses in his lecture, the library and the museum cross-reference both *topos* and *chronos*: libraries become sites of collective cultural constructs – real and/or imaginary, where "the pious descendents of time" conflict with "the determined inhabitants of space" (Foucault 1986: 22). If Foucault offers the possibility of conceptualizing the library as a heterotopia, Roger Chartier enables a rethinking of the bibliography through the concept of the inventory. In *The Order of Books* (1994), three key features stand out: "the author as an organizational principle for designating the work, the dream of a universal library, real or imagined … and the emergence of a new definition of the book that made an indissoluble connection between an object, a text, and an author" (Chartier 1994: vii). Chartier's book ends with discussions of the spats and feuds between two bibliophiles, Antoine du Verdier and La Croix de Maine, about their respective *Bibliothèques* – libraries – not so much those with four walls but those between the covers of a folio (Chartier 1994: 82–88). The *Bibliothèques* of du Verdier and de Maine inventory all discoverable titles in anticipation of the creation of a Universal Library. Chartier thus opens up the possibility of articulating "inventory" as a material system that is in no way neutral or politically disengaged.

The book and the author as an object of study and epistemological organization; the idea of a universal library as a space containing most, if not all discoverable titles; and an inventory that is universal in scope and global in scale – these are just a few ideas that have concerned discussants of world literature. When examined through Foucault's concepts of simultaneity, juxtaposition, and dispersion of multiple sites, world literature emerges as a space that acquires its meaning in reference to other geo-culturally locatable sites. The inter-discursive connections between libraries and world literature become conspicuous when the following three terms are considered together:

i. the *Bibliothèque*: the material and symbolic space created and inhabited by literary artifacts;
ii. the Bibliograph: writing of the inventory of such artifacts and objects into a catalogue; and
iii. Bibliophiles: the end-users, the readers *and* authors who exercise agency and imagine their subjectivities through the *Bibliothèque* and the Bibliograph in multiple ways.

The *Bibliothèque*, the Bibliograph, and the Bibliophile, when conceptually arranged in the networks of their "elliptical" trajectories (Damrosch 2003: 281), exert different kinds of forces on each other. These transformative forces can be located on the traces of "Bibliomigrancy": an umbrella term that describes the migration of literary works in the form of books from one part of the world to the other. While "physical" migration of books is comprised of book production and trade, translations, library acquisitions and circulation, "virtual" movement happens through adaptations and appropriation of narratives; in more recent times "virtual migration" has become the technical term for digitization of books. When we combine these two strands, we see that bibliomigrancy promotes and facilitates the processes of a "worlding" of literature, whereby libraries, publication venues, and new reading media play a crucial role. A complex politics of commerce fused with political ideology and historical realities informs publishing agendas, catalyzing changes in the very definition of world literature at different points of time in history.

## "Universal libraries": old and new world literatures

The idea of a universal library as imagined by du Verdier and de Maine acquired a concrete form in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1858, Anton Philip Reclam published an edition of August Wilhelm Schlegel's 1798 German translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The commercial success of this edition gave birth to the idea of a series that would be universal in scope – it would include titles from German literature as well as from other national literatures in German translations – and in its reach; the editions would be cheap, and therefore affordable to interested readers from all classes of society. A smart businessman, Reclam waited until 8 November 1867, when copyright for all authors who died before 1837 expired. And so, on 9 November 1867, Reclam's *Universal-Bibliothek* series was launched – with Goethe's *Faust: Eine Tragödie* (*Faust Part I*) as the first title. Apart from publishing works by canonical German authors such as Gotthold E. Lessing, Friedrich von Schiller, Jean Paul, and German translations of Shakespeare, Reclam was cashing in on the growing reading public, pricing its volumes at 2 silver-Groschen apiece (Schulz 1992, 11–25).

From translations of Scandinavian literature in the 1870s – Henrik Ibsen, Jens Peter Jacobsen, and August Strindberg – the *Universal-Bibliothek* quickly moved into publishing translations of classical Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese texts; the Reclam Catalogue from 1904 contains over fifty titles of works from "*Altislandisch*" (Old Icelandic) to "*Ungarisch*" (Hungarian). By 1917, Reclam officially declared an agenda of publishing world literature, "wie sie Goethe gehofft hat" ("as hoped for by Goethe"; Jäger 1992: 33). While the philosophical idealism that informed Goethe's concept might have initiated this declaration, market realities facilitated them. Between 1852 and 1900, annual German book production had trebled: from 8,857 works to 24,792 works respectively (*American Book Trade Manual* 1915: 12). The establishment of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1901 further energized the business of world literature. Although German, English, and Scandinavian authors dominated the first two decades, in 1913 Rabindranath Tagore became the first non-European

Nobel Laureate for literature. Slowly but surely, the evaluation and recognition of an author's work on a global scale was influencing publishers' agendas.

In 1927, on its sixtieth anniversary, the *Universal-Bibliothek* commissioned Hermann Hesse to write a short essay on book collection for private libraries for its *Lexikon des praktischen Wissens* (*Lexicon of Practical Knowledge* 1927). Reclam had vested financial interests in publishing this essay. In 1925, Germany led the list of the top five publishing nations in the world (Britain, France, the USA, and Italy were the other four) with 31,595 titles; of these, 6,338 were classified under "*belles lettres*" (*The Publishers' Weekly* 1928: 249–50). Hesse could not have been a better author of choice for this essay; he enjoyed wide name recognition as the best-selling German author of novels such as *Demian* (1919) and *Siddhartha* (1922). From Hermann Gundert, his maternal grandfather – a publisher and a Christian missionary in Kerala, India in the mid-nineteenth century – Hesse had inherited a huge private library. This library contained over 3,000 works of German and European literature, many of them priceless first editions, as well as scores of English and German translations of Sanskrit, Chinese, Sinhali, Persian, and Arabic texts that Hesse himself had added to it.

An expanded version of Hesse's brief essay for book collectors was published as "Eine Bibliothek der Weltliteratur" ("A Library of World Literature," 1929) in Reclam's *Universal-Bibliothek* series. This essay brings together the interactive energy of the *Bibliothèque*, the Bibliograph, and the Bibliophile. Writing for a discerning, wider reading public in the German language, Hesse underlines the significance of "*streben*" – to strive – to an engagement with world literature. He directs this striving towards a translinguistic, cosmopolitan training, a *Bildung* – education and formation of an individual through acts of engaging with world literature (Hesse 2004: 3). This particular intellectual training, for Hesse, is not to be evaluated through the victories and defeats that exemplify physical training but has its purpose in and of itself, "*an sich*" (Hesse 2004: 3). Hesse positions world literature as one of the most important ways to achieve this auto-purposive *Bildung*.

Hesse's arrangement of world literary artifacts throughout the essay occurs through national and regional paradigms – German, French, European, Asiatic, etc. – but those paradigms are also constantly diffused by privileging linguistic markers such as Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit over national ones. In other words, national markers remain ambivalently significant throughout the text. In fact, the totality of literatures from the world gains prominence in Hesse's framework. The study of world literature by a reader thus becomes an exercise in the gradual acquisition of familiarity with the thoughts, experiences, symbols, fantasies, and ideals of many peoples (*Völker*) throughout history. Building a personal library of world literature is for Hesse a task (*Aufgabe*) that brings one back to the basis of all human intellectual history (*Grundsatz aller Geistesgeschichte*); with the conviction, of course, that "the oldest works have the greatest longevity" ("*daß nähmlich die allerältesten Werke am wenigsten veralten*"). He therefore begins with Vedanta and the Upanishads, Laozu and Chuang Tzu, among others (Hesse 2004: 12–13).

Hesse establishes the primacy of the "*Meisterwerk*" (masterpiece) as an evaluative principle for understanding world literature, evaluating the masterpiece on the basis of its longevity – that is, accessibility in the space of world literature. He distinguishes between "old" world literature and "new" world literature, but emphasizes

that the mere inclusion of newer works into the canon of world literature will not suffice. Sometimes newer translations of older works would be far more effective in enriching readers' engagement with world literary artifacts. For Hesse, world literature relies on acts of translation but as translation (*Übersetzung*) is an approximation (*Annährung*) (Hesse: 2004: 11), he stresses the need for translations of a superior quality – not just from one language into another, but also multiple, updated translations within a language that would reflect the changes in the language itself – thereby rendering the eternal stability of a translated work defunct.

All of these points find their culmination in Hesse's bold acceptance that world literature itself is and should be open to transformation (Hesse 2004: 43). As Hesse reflects on his library, its material contents, and his engagement with the material, the essay becomes more than a guide for collectors, bibliophiles, and other interested readers who wished to acquire and read literary works from around the world. Hesse conveys a simple message: "a" library of world literature will always already be incomplete (*unvollkommen*), but it must reflect the pleasure derived from books (*Bücherfreude*) and the desire to read them (*Lesertrieb*) (Hesse 2004: 34). In sum, Hesse transforms the definition of the European bourgeois library as well as the European cosmopolis through his ideas about a library of world literature. World literature in the Goethean sense is thus "*aufgehoben*" – preserved, but also cancelled!

It is impossible here to elaborate on the history of Reclam in the divided Germany of the postwar era up to the years immediately following German reunification in 1989 (Lokatis 2003). Suffice it to say that the publishing industry in the second half of the twentieth century bore the marks of a political history of the world prior to World War II. With the decolonization of Asia and Africa, the world was introduced to new literary works by contemporary authors. After World War II, Hesse's idea of the changing definition of world literature became a reality, and colonial politics played an important part in the formation of what is today understood as "new" world literatures.

"Thirty Years of a New World Literature" was the title of a short article in the *Bookseller* (15 January 1993) outlining the achievements of Heinemann Educational Books' African Writers Series. The author of the piece was Alan Hill, who served as the managing director of Heinemann at the time of the inception of the African Writers Series in 1962. The article was published a fortnight after the African Writers Series received the World Development Award for Business, sponsored by the British Worldaware Organization. Queen Elizabeth II was the patron of this organization; Lord Grenfell, the chief of external relations of the World Bank, served as chair of the six-member jury. In his article, Hill mentions the profit-oriented mindset of A.S. Frere, then chairman of Heinemann. Along with other publishing outfits, Frere was eager to tap into the African book market in the 1960s, "the frenetic era of nation-building" (Hill 1993: 58) in post-independence African countries with a large demand for educational books – mostly textbooks and primarily in English. "For most of these companies," Hill writes, "African authors did not exist" (Hill 1993: 58). Against this commercial backdrop Hill describes receiving, in 1957, a manuscript of a novel "from a student from Ibadan University" (Hill 1993: 58). This was *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by none other than Chinua Achebe, who later became the first editor of the African Writers Series.

Hill's article can easily be read as a classic tale of the triumph of literature/art over commerce. Closer scrutiny reveals why it should be read differently. The sudden emergence of an African "masterpiece" as late as the 1950s – and in English, the language of the colonizer – today seems dubious. The purported non-existence of African authors on a continent that is home to at least a few hundred languages and literary traditions would today be called a manifestation of sanctioned ignorance. Moreover, the characters involved in the recognition of the triumph – a Britain-based publisher, the queen of England, a charity organization, the chair of the World Bank – all become part of a complex history of colonial mission, educational ambition, and corporate commission. The history of the African Writers Series and its cryptic role in the development of African literatures has been a topic of several scholarly discussions and debates (Mpe 1999; Chakava 1995). The African Writers Series' geographical focus on West Africa, at least in the first decade of its existence, and its emphasis on English-language works written mostly by male authors has earned stringent criticism. After all, Heinemann "reminded" one of Africa through a particular "packaging" of the continent, evident not merely in the editorial selection criteria but also on the dust jackets: invocations of "ethnicized" art reminiscent of Gauguin's Tahiti-period against a bright orange background!

And yet one cannot simply dismiss Heinemann's role in facilitating access to post-independence African writers. Between 1962 and 2003, Heinemann published some 350 titles by over 100 African authors (Currey 2008: 301–10). For students at colleges and universities enrolled in courses in African literature, and to discerning readers who frequented bookstores and public libraries, Heinemann became synonymous with African writing both in the English originals and in translation. To think of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Mweja Mwangi, Tayyeb al-Salih and others was to think of Heinemann. Hill's claim for the production of a "new" world literature does not seem that far fetched after all.

The question of access to world literature and the medium of dissemination of a work of literature was at the center of my opening discussion of Susan Sontag. Towards the end, let us revisit these issues with the example of an author from India. In an essay entitled "Ek Dusri Zindagi" ("A Second Life," 2006), the celebrated Hindi novelist Nirmal Verma reflects on his life-long intimate relationship with books. At the very outset of the essay, he compares books to old friends who have been in his life for so long that the first meeting becomes less important than the lasting friendship that develops. Very quickly, however, as he moves to a discussion of certain books as his "best friends," first meetings become distinct. The size of the edition, its color, the thickness of the pages, the smell, all contribute to the readers' imagination of the personalities of Verma's "best friends," which he first met in college in the 1950s. These include the New York-based Modern Library's English translation of Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* (1938 edition) with its "light blue binding and thin pages" (Verma 2006: 155).

The Modern Library, established in 1917 as an idealistic enterprise of a then 25-year-old Albert Boni of Greenwich Village, is one of the iconic publishing companies in the United States that reprinted European translations and gained a world-wide circulation. Boni started the Modern Library with his business partner, Liveright, primarily with the idea of giving US readers access to works by

"post-Victorian" European thinkers and authors such as Friedrich Nietzsche, George Bernard Shaw, August Strindberg, and Henrik Ibsen, among others (Neavill 1981: 241). In 1925, Boni and Liveright sold the company to Bennet Cerf and Donald S. Klopfer (Neavill 1981: 243). While the *Universal-Bibliothek* could lean on decades of Reclam's publishing tradition prior to its inauguration (Bode 1992), and the African Writers Series had Heinemann's prestige (St. John 1990), Boni started out with sheer idealism, supported only by his business partner, Liveright. While aiming to produce books universal in reach, and at least transcontinental – if not necessary global – in its publishing agenda, the Modern Library was committed to publishing the literature of modern authors. Initiating its series with Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), the Modern Library in the early 1920s published Gustave Flaubert, Ivan Turgenev, and Arthur Schnitzler, and later also Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka. The access to world literature that the Modern Library provided Susan Sontag in the US was the same as that which a famous Hindi-language author would have had halfway around the world in New Delhi.

In sum, with cheaper production costs, growing international markets, and larger reading publics, book series such as *Universal-Bibliothek*, the African Writers Series, and the Modern Library became a very important source of access to world literature and a resource for the continued "worlding" of literary narratives in the twentieth century. Emanating in different geo-cultural locations, these series contributed to opening up the very idea of world literature to comparative evaluations.

## Conclusion

The project of world literature is fraught with tensions between local formations and global transformations, national demarcations and transnational projections, individual differentiations and universal configurations. World literature incorporates various institutions of literature, literary readings being just one of them. The act of reading is inherently connected with bibliomigrancy, the accessibility or inaccessibility to imaginative texts from elsewhere. The space of reading – the physical and metaphorical space of the library – demands an account of the agreed-upon and the contestable, as shelf lives of books are created beyond their points of origin. When the act and space of reading are considered in tandem, borrowing privileges acquire new meanings. World literature ceases to remain a space of infinitely accumulating time and consecutively arranged sites. It becomes a space of multiple sites with discontinuous temporalities, each one deriving its meaning through – to use Foucault's terms – vectors of juxtaposition, dispersion, inversion, and contestation. Through this discontinuous and non-consecutive arrangement of time and space – *chronos* and *topos* – world literature acquires it cosmochronic and cosmotopic dimensions.

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# 30
# WORLD LITERATURE AND THE INTERNET

*Thomas O. Beebee*

For the purposes of this chapter, "internet" is taken to mean the network of communications that theoretically allows a computer anywhere on the globe rapid access to any other computer's information. I use "theoretically" in order to cover some qualifiers that are no doubt familiar to most readers. The computers must have the proper hardware and software for internet use, must actually be hooked up to the internet through a telephone line, wireless connection, etc., either not be firewalled against intrusion or the "intruder" possess the proper identification, and so forth. For many users, the internet is synonymous with the World Wide Web, but in fact the internet consists of other modes of communication such as e-mail, Telnet, and FTP, to name a few.

A more technical definition is that the internet is "a collection of computer networks talking to each other using packet switching" (Gillies and Cailliau 2000: 6). Messages are broken up into packets as they leave the sender, and are reassembled at the other end by the receiver's software. Neither an explanation of packet switching nor a history of the development of the internet out of CERN and ARPANET are relevant to the world-literature aspect of the internet, which consists mainly of the fact that computers "talk to each other." An important software or programming aspect that is essential to the functioning of the World Wide Web is the universal use of Hypertext Mark-Up Language, or HTML. This is the language that allows all computers to format texts, thus enabling the simulacrum of familiar print culture to exist on the internet, alongside additional dynamic features that have resulted in new forms of textuality.

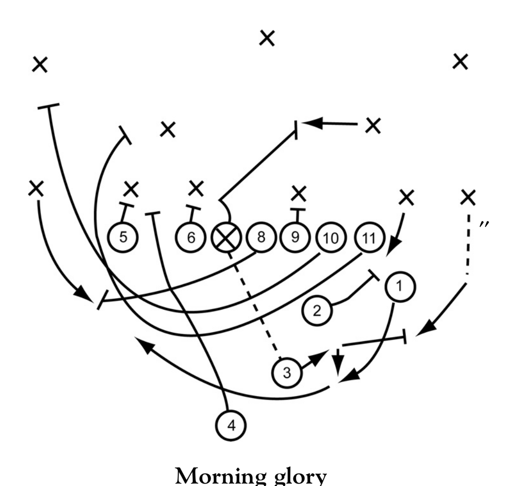
One can use computer and communications hardware to create information, to store it, and to share it with others. Luciano Floridi has usefully outlined the internet's three elements or domains: that of hardware (the physical dimension); that of memory platform (the digital dimension); and that of semantics (the cyberspace dimension) (Floridi 1999: 61–63). The existence of the last two depends upon the first; the third, semantic or cyberspace dimension has relevance for the production of literature, whereas the second, digital dimension has relevance for the archiving and distribution of literary texts new and old. Analogously, the internet functions both as a new writing technology (e.g. the blog), and as an archiving and retrieval platform for works originally published under "old" technologies.

This chapter will discuss the impact of the internet on world literature in three distinct areas: (1) literary production; (2) literary readership and reception; and (3) literary scholarship. There is also a category between 1 and 2, namely publishing and marketing, and between 2 and 3, namely awards and prizes, which are a specialized form of reading that borders and sometimes depends on scholarship. I will restrict myself as much as possible to literature that depends specifically on the internet for its existence, and to the impact of the internet on readers' access to world literature.

## Internet literature

Imagine that you have bought the intriguingly titled "Coach's Playbook" off the horror paperback rack of your local supermarket, and are now reading the following on page 2:

> Now that I think about it, some of the other players are actin' kinda funny too. Even the teachers 'round here. Everyone seems so sluggish and pale. People are coughin', complainin' about headaches and sometimes I swear I think they're hallucinatin'! Earlier today one of the janitors, Frank, was starin' out into blank space. I walked up to him to ask if he saw the baseball game last night when all of a sudden he started screamin' bloody hell and talkin' about some horde of blood thirsty, God knows what, chasin' after him last night. I asked if he was okay but he just stared at me with his bloodshot eyes, with a ring of lemon yellow around his pupils, which were as big and black as hell. His skin was a shade of "corpse blue", I like to call it. He had patches of varicose veins around his face and the top of his head, which I could see just fine on account of his hair loss. I ain't never seen someone look like that before. God knows what's goin' on but all I can do is pray that I don't catch this bug goin' around.




**Morning glory**

> Note to self: Typical football play, when done right, it will wipe the feet from underneath those Arlington boys. This was executed pretty shitty today at practice. Let's pray to God these boys step up their game.
>
> O'Connor (n.d.)

The text quoted above shows some familiar literary features: it is in first-person diary form, in this case, entries in the playbook of a high school football coach from Savannah, Georgia; it combines text with illustrations, as in medieval illuminated manuscripts, children's literature, *manga*/graphic novels, and many serialized nineteenth-century novels; it characterizes the narrator humorously through his dialectal or idiosyncratic use of language, such as the dropping of final "g"s and his penchant for vulgarity. It addresses familiar themes of a mysterious illness: readers familiar with Stephen King's *The Stand*, the film *28 Weeks Later*, or other end-of-the-world-through-epidemic fictions will find themselves predicting that this is not the kind of bug to be gotten over, and they will be right: it is the zombie flu, and the innocent game of football will soon be replaced by the überdeadly game of zombie-zapping – at which point minds trained in literature may flip back to the innocent-looking play diagrams, such as "Mornin' Glory" shown above, and wonder whether they provided the kind of mental maps Coach will need in order to evade zombie blockades.

In fact, this particular narrative is a product of computer gaming. It is the literary recreation of a "shooter" video game, Left4Dead 2, played by a student in my Occult Literature class at the Pennsylvania State University in spring 2010. I had offered this "ergodic" (see below) assignment as an alternative to a conventional term paper. Those who elected the role-playing game option were asked to write a narrative of their gameplay, followed by an encyclopedia article that placed the events in the context of whatever virtual world they had occurred in. Cynthia M. O'Connor fulfilled the assignment with a narrative that exemplifies the high degree of interaction between gaming and literature in the early twenty-first century. She did so by choosing a game that is "immersive" on account of its graphic intensity – watching the characters move through the landscape is like watching a film – but narratively impoverished.

In online gaming, players adopt roles or choose an avatar and insert themselves into virtual environments that can range from the everyday (the Sims) to the apocalyptic (World of Warcraft). The type of game that is most fundamentally dependent on the internet for its existence and interest has come to be called Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing. The increased bandwidth and sophistication of Web 2.0 has allowed this "upgrade" in gaming from MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) and MOOs (Multi-User Object-Oriented), which tended to be more textually based games in which players navigated and interacted by asking questions and following directions, rather than by moving arrow keys and joysticks. In turn, MUDs were based on tabletop games such as Dungeons and Dragons where players would meet face-to-face and undertake adventure together. As the name states, in Massively Multiplayer games many people from all over the world – World of Warcraft has registered users from four different continents – may participate at any one time by logging into a website that creates a virtual environment. Within this environment, they may choose a role or avatar, through the persona of which they then interact with other players. The end result is the construction, by thousands of players plus the game creators, of the fictional history of an alternative world. Besides World of Warcraft, which has more than eight million users world-wide, other prominent examples include Second Life and

Everquest. World of Warcraft currently uses four "official languages," namely English, French, German, and Spanish. This means that millions of players are interacting through a second or third language. (Linguistic interaction, effected through "chat," is an important part of the game, as players form groups to undertake tasks together.) World of Warcraft has also inspired the most sustained effort at academic analysis of gaming to date, the collection *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity* (see Corneliussen and Rettberg 2008).

As Marie-Laure Ryan points out (2001: 347–55), for centuries, perhaps millennia, culture has dreamed of the transmutation of art into some kind of "second life," whether this be the coming to life of Pygmalion's statue, Alice's Wonderland, or Charles Baudelaire's symbolist world of correspondences. There is always a tension, however, between the immersive qualities of such created worlds and the degree of interactivity they provide. Hypertext, like poetry, is interactive, but hardly immersive. Cinema, when done well, can immerse viewers in creative worlds (the revival of 3D in the early twenty-first century speaks to this capability), but by that same token provides all the information to viewers. Computer games are one of the few forms that can be immersive and interactive at the same time.

But does gaming produce literature? Not in our received sense of the word. But then, neither is oral tradition literary, despite its being frequently included as if it were such in both anthologies and histories of world literature. Unscripted performance genres, from Japanese *rokugo* to American stand-up comedy, are one area of orature that literary scholars have had few qualms about studying, and there have been some attempts to combine the virtual role-playing of Second Life, for example, with live actors using computer projection (see Farley et al. 2009). Such miscegenation of the virtual with the real brings to fruition the "Hamlet on the Holodeck" scenario predicted by Janet Murray (1997) back when the World Wide Web was just getting started. Beyond any formal (dis)similarities to literature, we may also wish to consider the convergence of expectations between readers and players. Just as we look backwards on orality and performance as a kind of matrix out of which literature arose, so we might also imagine forward into the future, and speculate on what kinds of interactive texts may arise.

Some new forms of literature have emerged from the internet, of which the most prominent is hypertext, which shares with gaming the general characteristic of being "ergodic," a term coined by Espen Aarseth (1997) to designate a kind of text that encourages movement and interactivity from the user, rather than distanced and passive absorption. Strictly speaking, hypertext can be "read" on an individual computer without access to the internet, and many such are created in this fashion, but both the textual possibilities given to the creator and the capacity for distribution are greatly enhanced through links to the World Wide Web. One of these distribution hubs, eastgate.com, defines hypertext as writing that "uses links to create multiple paths through a document" ("Frequently Asked Questions"). Readers are encouraged and often forced to abandon a linear pathway through a narrative or poem in favor of the leap into the unknown through clicking on a link. Michael Joyce's "Twelve Blue" provides an apt example of this structure. The reader is presented with a box containing twelve lines (not all of them blue) and eight numbers below it. One can call forth lexemes for the story either by clicking on different parts

of the image, or by clicking on the numbers below it. When the lexemes contain links, each one that is clicked adds a vertical bar with a version of the twelve lines to the screen. Clicking on one of the lines in a bar may change the orientation of the lines (or maybe not). The narrative of "Twelve Blue" is suggestive rather than coherent, and its relation to the artwork that forms an integral part of the traversal experience of the text remains suggested rather than explained. Hypertext has shown itself to be more suitable for lyric, especially lyric that explores the reader's relationship to the graphemes of language, than to narrative. As Beat Suter points out, hypertext makes visible the invisible "Leerstellen" (translated as "gaps," but literally "vacant spots") that all literary texts make use of, favoring interactivity over immersion.

The direct literary impact of the internet has been most noticeable on minor genres and sub-genres, such as the epistolary novel, reborn as the e-mail or cellphone novel, and the diary, which on the internet becomes a weblog or blog. The literary critic Philippe Lejeune made a point of following a number of diary blogs in French for a year, from 1999 to 2000. He summarizes the transformative qualities of the internet medium for the diary form as follows:

> The Internet is revolutionary in that it allows anyone to publish instantly and as often as they like (working "online" means going live); to attain virtual worldwide publication […]; and to have potential interactivity (through reader feedback). A person can either be thrilled by the possibilities, or realize, on second thought, that they are the total opposite of the conditions that led to the development of the personal diary, which is based on a different notion of time (delay, maturation, and accuracy). With the Internet we face the paradox of writing without "*différance*," writing that is almost as instantaneous as speech, and privacy with no inside, since everything seems to be outside immediately. The *internalization* of social structures that created the individual self (the "heart of hearts") seems to move in the opposite direction on the Internet.
>
> (Lejeune 2009: 301)

The e-mail and cellphone novels are subject to similar analysis. The latter, called *ketai shosetsu*, became especially popular in Japan in the first decade of the twenty-first century. They are written primarily by and for women, and in the beginning were an exclusively online phenomenon: the "classic" *ketai* narrative is written horizontally rather than vertically, with few ideograms, since those are difficult to enter on phone numberpads, and delivered directly to the cellphone or the computer user. By the end of 2007, four out of the five best-selling novels in Japan were cellphone novels published in print (Goodyear 2008: 63). The website Maho i-land offers thousands of titles. As cellphone use merges world-wide into mobile data retrieval and manipulation, presumably the cellphone novel will become a world form. Peter V. Brett wrote 100,000 words of a novel on his Smartphone between 2007 and 2009 (see Wilson 2009). At the small end of things, it has become fashionable to exploit the length limits of Twitter messages to write haiku poetry. What is interesting about such forms is that they tend to draw the artistic out of the

pragmatic, which in the case of warblogs and other such forms includes the political (see Ringrose 2007).

## Literary readership and reception

The previous section has considered new forms of literature that emerge from the internet. In this section, I address the phenomenon of "old" forms that find new readers through the internet. One obvious example of this is that most authors nowadays have home pages that can be extensive and elaborate, and a number also maintain their own blogs. In the days before the internet, readers would have to rely on dust-jacket blurbs, news stories, and print biographies to learn more about an author; the internet provides a semantic platform through which authors can constantly provide updates on their work to maintain reader interest. The Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, for example, maintains his website – www.paulocoelho.com – in thirteen different languages. It includes a FAQ where he answers questions submitted by his fans.

Obviously, authors who are deceased benefit from this divulgation of information over the internet no less than do live authors. Some of the greatest figures of world literature, such as Richard Wagner, for example, have multiple competing websites and blogs. One can choose, for example, between the websites of various Wagner societies in the Americas, Europe, and Asia, the "Wagner Archive" by the Finnish Wagnerite Hannu Salmi (http://users.utu.fi/hansalmi/wagner.html), or wagneroperas.com where one can, of course, purchase Wagner books, CDs, and DVDs. The resulting "Wagner web" constructed by poring through the links found on these various sites results in an image (distorted, of course, as all images are), unique to the internet, of the global reception of an artist's work.

It could be argued that the mediatization of literature through the internet interferes with, rather than aids, assessment of the intrinsic value of literary artworks. If so, then it probably should be considered as an especially visible element in the overall network of intermediary communication that has always contributed to literary reputation. As Pascale Casanova argues, a literature's relative position in world literature is measured "not in terms of the number of writers and readers it has, but in terms of the number of cosmopolitan intermediaries – publishers, editors, critics, and especially translators – who assure the circulation of texts into the language or out of it" (Casanova 2004: 21). Today many of those intermediaries are working on websites, e-mails, blogs, or other internet sites. Teachers of world literature are, of course, no less a part of the mediatizing processes. Coincidentally(?), the Modern Language Association published in one and the same year (2009) both the collection of essays on *Teaching World Literature*, edited by David Damrosch and the collection *Teaching Literature and Language Online*, edited by Ian Lancashire. Articles in the latter collection by William Kuskin, Gerald Lucas, and Haun Saussy speak to the "worlding" of language and literature through the medium of the internet.

## Literary scholarship and theory

Less than two decades after its going public, the internet has dramatically altered both the presentation of literary scholarship and the way such scholarship is accessed. Taking the latter point first, it seems hard to deny that the scholarly access to significant parts of the world's literatures has never been easier than it is at present. Numerous manuscripts, rare books, and correspondence that previously required travel to consult can now be freely accessed on the internet. The internet is also affecting the way scholars present archival materials and editions. Digitization not only enables retrieval and swift and accurate searching for terms of interest; it also allows for multiple presentation formats of the same material. For example, the correspondence of an author can be presented chronologically, alphabetically by sender or receiver of a letter, or by place sent from. Online editors no longer need to choose between these possibilities for presentation – instead, all these dispositions are potentially present at the website, and the reader can move from one to another with a single click. The presence of links in scholarship and the generalized awareness of hypertext has led to a concept of the traditional scholarly work (and some literary ones) as "frozen hypertext," where footnote numbers serve as links.

The combination of new, ergodic forms of literature with the movement of literary and cultural archives out of the vaults of rare-book rooms and into the public sphere of the World Wide Web impacts on the scholarly view of the ontology and phenomenology of literature. It brings literature a considerable step closer towards the pole Roland Barthes theorized as the "scriptible," which he opposed to the "lisible" (Bartes 1974). Scriptable literature, as the term implies, consists of texts that need the user's input to be made readable. Such, most definitely, are hypertexts and games, even though this does not mean that the users have complete or even considerable autonomy in constructing outcomes. Nevertheless, these forms, along with the changes to scholarship noted above, have given strong impetus to "social text" theory, which, according to Steven E. Jones, substitutes the traditional view of literary texts as "static and isolated verbal objects" with a focus on "dynamic discourse fields composed of interacting verbal, graphic, bibliographic, cultural, ideological, and social forces" (Jones 2009: 268). This is what Jerome McGann has dubbed "radiant textuality," the idea of "links" irradiating out from the textual matrix that houses them.

## The internet as global cultural memory

It is possible to imagine the millions of computers hooked up to the internet as cells of a giant, virtual, global brain that is thinking, remembering – and forgetting. It is possible to imagine the future research value of the millions of blogs, bulletin boards, listservs, and websites available online as an archive of the way the world "thought" about certain topics at certain times. I have so far emphasized mostly the advantages of the internet for world literature, such as rapid and widespread divulgation of texts and increased ease of access for literary scholars and historians. It is time now to mention one of the main disadvantages of the internet, namely the

fragility of information storage. Computers may be the most unstable environment yet seen for the preservation of cultural memory.

Most readers of this chapter will be familiar with the most prominent reason for this instability, having been compelled constantly to "upgrade" to newer system and software versions. Many will have had the experience of trying to open an old file, only to find that the new software is incapable of recognizing it. Suppose a computer file were to be lost, and rediscovered one hundred years hence: in the present state of software chaos and instability, the chance that it would be readable by the computers of 2200 is minimal. This narrow window of readability contrasts greatly with the solidity and durability of the book – though significant portions of that memory have been lost as well, as a result of crumbling paper, library fires, disappearance of languages, and so forth.

One can add to these predictable memory losses the accidental ones. In 1998, the prominent German newspaper *Die Zeit* joined with IBM and Radio Bremen to sponsor a contest called Pegasus 98 that challenged authors to combine the traditional linguistic resources of literature with the aesthetic and technical media provided through the internet. Ironically, the results of the contest were lost when a server of Radio Bremen on which they were stored went kaput. As Roland Kamzelak points out, the "radiant" nature of the internet is such that the collateral damage of such a loss extends far beyond the actual Pegasus texts, to all pages whose former links to those texts are now dead (Kamzelak 2004: 70).

The fact that internet writing is infinitely erasable has both advantages and disadvantages. Writers and editors can correct and update their sites at will, for example, in order to correct errors or to present their texts more effectively. By the very same token, citation of such sites by others needs more vigilance than in the case of print, and there is always the chance that the URL given in a citation will end up as a dead link, as in the Pegasus case mentioned above. A "Charter on the Preservation of the Digital Heritage" was adopted by the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO in November 2003. UNESCO set up a commission to study the issue of the fragility of information on the internet. The Commission issued a report, "Preserving Digital Heritage: Principles and Policies," in 2007 (Lusenet and Watermans 2007). The report noted the considerable obstacles to anything resembling an archiving of the internet. These include the fact that many pages link to other pages located on other servers, the sheer volume of material, and copyright issues concerning the software for viewing the items.

In writings that first shaped our notion of world literature, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe coined the adjective "*velociferisch*" (velocitous) in order to describe the ever-increasing rhythm of trade and commerce between the European nations which, so Goethe believed, were bringing with them an increase in literary interconnectivity that would result in *Weltliteratur*. He wrote to A.C.F. Steckfuss on 27 October 1827, requesting news about any foreign literature his correspondent might find worthy of mentioning, because "the products of the various nations now commingle with such velocity, that we need to invent a new modality for learning of and reacting to them" (Goethe 1908: 136, my translation). Since the making public of the internet in the early 1990s, we appear to be in a time of world literature such as Goethe imagined, though the seeming familiarity of the effects he is describing almost two centuries before the fact may make us suspect a case of "*plus ça change*." It seems plausible to

surmise that the type of global communication and interconnectedness embodied in the internet has played some role in the ever-increasing attention paid to world literature, as more and more cultures and language areas come online. The internet has been called the "third revolution" in the fixation of linguistic and mental concepts, the first two being the invention of writing and the development of movable type. If this is true, then its impact on world literature must be far more profound than a chapter of this size – and composed so near the beginning of this revolution – could ever hope to convey.

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# 31
# WORLD LITERATURE AND THE LIBRARY

*Reingard Nethersole*

## The library: receptacle, resource, record

To the measures of history belong the three terms "world," "literature," and "library" that together designate an equilateral triangular field from which emerged the book. A genesis of the cultural technology of book production, distribution, and collecting (Febvre and Martin 1976; Martin 1994) knotted into the conceptualization of literature as storied expressions of a people adumbrates that ubiquitous site we call the library; that is the representation and function of a space referred to in most European languages in terms derived etymologically from *libri* (Lat.: book) and *bibliothēkē* (Greek: bookstacks, onomatopoetically adopted in isiZulu as *ilabhulali*). From inscribed clay tablets to hand-written papyrus, parchment, or paper, from scriptural and typographical (print) manifestations to computer-screen pixels in our digital age, technology defines both the power of book writing and the structure of the library – or "House of Wisdom" and learning in the Islamic world – from its mid-seventeenth century BCE inception in Mesopotamia (Black 2004: 47; Damrosch 2007; Manguel 2007: 95–96), to Alexandria's famous and fabled Royal Library established by Ptolemy in about 290 BCE (Raven 2004: 13), and finally to its most recent manifestation, thanks to the World Wide Web, the literally de-territorialized and dematerialized library without walls.

Given the perspective of world literature, how does the library, with its memorable analogy of "library" and "universe" (Borges 1964: 78) that more than ever speaks to today's global "Library of Babel," engage with the "field of force generated among works that may come from very different cultures and eras" (Damrosch 2003: 300)? How do libraries, occupying a particular local, culturally and linguistically circumscribed site that constitutes a social space, closely connected to the vicissitudes of the very social world which often sets it aside from itself as its own, furnish what Casanova (2004: 47) calls "world literary space"? What do libraries and their holdings contribute to a literary history aspiring to be of a transnational global world? In the following I sketch answers to these questions by focusing on the library's symbolic, cultural and "real" "capital" (Goethe 1959a: 454), its "working tools" (Eco

1994: 117), and its place as inventory of the possible, besides intimating the commerce of books whereby one book "calls to another unexpectedly, creating alliances across different cultures and centuries." (Manguel 2007: 14)

But in addition to the historical mutation of libraries (from their imperial origin to their monastic, royal, private, public, national, specialized, and finally research-oriented development) we need to remember also the metamorphosis of the reader over the centuries. After all, Manguel's (2010: 151–54) "ideal" or even "good enough" reader is the contemporary (Western) reader who has internalized the modern method of "private reading in a quiet place away from other people" that, evolved over the course of two centuries from the sixteenth to the eighteenth, allows "the reader to engage in solitary reflection on what he or she read" (Chartier 1989: 124–25). Typically such a reader, unlike a casual reader seeking information, inhabits three classes of library: "real," imagined and virtual, each of which makes for very different corporal sense experiences.

A "real" library, one that houses physical collections of books arranged in certain orders, serves as a vector for the deposit, transmission, dissemination, preservation, and *wechselseitige* or mutually effective exchange of multifarious voices and polyvalent knowledges past and present. Oftentimes, the very architecture and décor of these tactile spaces, resembling a cathedral (e.g., Sterling Memorial Library, Yale, or the Peabody Public Library in Baltimore) or a Greek temple (Widener Library, Harvard), purposely conjures earlier periods of learning; other libraries housed in refurbished palaces, like the significant research library in Wolfenbüttel, Germany, refer more implicitly to previous forms of social and spiritual authority. Thus signifying a trajectory from Greco-Roman to medieval and early modern times, libraries literally cast in stone, refract traces of cultural relations across societies, countries, and ages epitomized by the new Library of Alexandria. Conceived by UNESCO, designed in the modernist style by Norwegian architects and decorated by international artists, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina rebuilt by the Egyptian government on this most historic of sites provides, like its predecessor, a rich cross-section of the world's books, together with gathering spaces for the world's scholars.

How the architecture and lay-out of a library can map specific figurations of public and private intercourse with books and readers can be gleaned, for example, from French essayist Michel Montaigne's panoptic library in a tower on his country estate. Montaigne's library-study, nerve centre of the household from where he could oversee the domestic sphere of farmyard and kitchen without being seen, as he explains in his *Essays* (Montaigne 1603: III, ch. 3), reflects a particular position of the reader (subject) in relation to himself, books, and the world. This particular position of what Montaigne called *librairie*, not *bibliothèque*, which gives a kind of power to the person who retires there, inscribes a modern subjectivity that, with recourse to learning from a plethora of books from different regions and ages, has become the agent of his own actions, someone who reads so as to independently find his own bearings in perilous times, without interference from worldly and spiritual authority.

Existing only in the mind, imagined libraries conjure a multitude of texts from different cultures in which book reading and the library speak as subjects to specific ways of "worlding" the world, to use Kadir's (2004, 2010) expression. Finally, the virtual library as an amalgam of the previous two consists of immaterial bits of

digital data that are circulated globally 24/7 at the speed of light, substantially altering the process of slow, rummaging, attention-entreating reading associated with books – not Kindles – as sensuously real objects that we hold in our hands.

Thinking about the library (Darnton 2009; Stephens 2009), usually the prerogative of library science (Battles 2003), has been exercising many writers of late, not least Alberto Manguel (2007, 2010), whose vertically and horizontally expansive treatment pays eloquent homage to the world's memory embodied in its books. This concern surely testifies to the disquiet experienced in our age of transition from hand-written and printed pages to pixels in an epochal transformation of cultural technology reminiscent of the social upheaval set in motion in Europe by Gutenberg's invention of mechanical movable type around 1439. Although relating to the emergence and spread of television in the 1960s, McLuhan's by now standard text, *The Gutenberg Galaxy; The Making of Typographic Man* (1969), is still worth reading next to Robert Darnton's seminal account, in his *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future* (2009). of the impact that Google has on both "the library as a citadel and the Internet as open space" (33).

A private library, the gathering place of eighteenth-century writers and thinkers of a pan-European and intercontinental "Republic of Letters" – reminiscent of the *respublica litterarum* of the Roman world – was the birthplace of the modern idea of world literature, driven by cosmopolitan intent in response to parochial nationalism [see Buescu in this volume]. Goethe's study in his Weimar house boasted, besides extensive collections of artifacts and objects from natural science, 7,500 books, making for 5,424 titles in the inventory (Ruppert 1958), spanning publications in all areas of knowledge in more than twenty languages and literatures from the sixteenth century to his own day. Included among catalogues, encyclopedias, and the latest novels was a German rendition of fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz' *Diwān* published in Calcutta in 1812–13, as well as French writer Dennis Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, which in Goethe's German translation was already in print before it appeared in its original in France.

On a visit to the Göttingen University's research library in 1801, Goethe (1959a: 454) muses that "in the presence of a library one feels as though in the vicinity of a vast capital silently yielding incalculable interest." Embodying "masses of scholarship" both seductive and daunting, as Goethe surmises while working on his color theory at the time (455), the library as symbolic capital not only represents a repository of knowledge about the world but also serves as a receptacle of ways in which the world has been fashioned and experienced. As such, particular libraries are nodes in a network of trans-border cultural exchanges, and they refract in their book, journal, and manuscript collections the scriptural economy of a culture and an age. This holds true as much for the ancient and Far Eastern worlds as it does for the European Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century and our own era.

For instance, the collection of codices in a seventh-century AD English abbey library, acquired largely through connections with Continental Europe (chiefly Italy and Gaul), enabled the Venerable Bede (c. 673–735) to compose his Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Angolorum*, a panorama of Christian English history. Together with other books in identical bindings, among them a *History of China*, Bede's volume in turn features as background in the 1771 portrait depicting the *Reverend*

*Dr. Ezra Stiles*, president of Yale College (illustrated in Chartier 1989: 133). In other words, the symbolic capital gathered by Bede that enabled him to introduce the unifying, enriching civilization and culture of Rome into a country like Britain, torn by Celtic tribalism, eventually became cultural capital in the New World as evidenced in the Stiles portrait. In each case the transfer of capital represented by library collections not only transforms a culture but erases an earlier one in a struggle for cultural assertion and dominance. Moreover, the potency of the written word gives libraries as storehouses of memory a political force that makes them targets for dissenters, rebels, and revolutionaries, as witnessed by the wholesale destruction of libraries throughout the centuries, including the burning of books during the Nazi era (Battles 2003, Damrosch 2007; Martin 1994; Raven 2004).

None other than Shakespeare, who will have known of the destruction of ecclesiastical and monastic libraries in England and Europe after the Reformation, staged the powerful qualities associated with writing, books and the library. In *Henry VI Part 2*, Shakespeare dramatizes in the figure of rebel leader Jack Cade the resistance to writing, seen as an instrument of state power used by the authorities as a method of domination, whether by law or "magic," employed by the strong against the weak. Cade's rebels, like Caliban in *The Tempest*, fearing that their traditional culture based on speech and signs is in jeopardy, attack the places where symbolic capital is enshrined: the Inns of Court, meaning lawyers' offices, and Prospero's library, respectively. Lawyers, clergy, and the aristocracy were the principal book collectors, as evidenced by inventories of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century libraries (Chartier 1989; Febvre and Martin 1976; Martin 1994).

Thus the library represents a twofold symbolic power: on the one hand, the library is "dukedom large enough," as Prospero says (*Tempest*, Act 1, sc. ii: 110), who thanks the person who allowed him to take with him into exile some of his precious books: "Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me, / from my own library, with volumes that / I prize above my dukedom" (Act 1, sc. ii: 166–68). Like Shakespeare's contemporary Montaigne, Prospero values the power of the library conferred by the sense of withdrawal from the world into an absolute liberty made possible by commerce with books, hence of the possibility of complete self-mastery without constraint or supervision from external forces, typical of a secular reader, in contrast to a reader whose veneration of the written word as sacred remains tied to religious authority. On the other hand, Prospero's familiar, cherished books, companions in solitude and misery, are also the instruments of a "magical" power, feared and fearsome. Knowing this, Caliban thinks that Prospero's secret power can be destroyed if his books are seized and burned: "Remember, / First to possess his books; for without them / He's but a sot, as I am" (Act 3, sc. ii: 83–85), and "Burn but his books" (Act 3, sc. ii: 87).

Working capital for Goethe, purveyor of models of self-improvement for citizens hungering after fashionable novels made available by the rapidly expanding public (lending) libraries established in the eighteenth century, followed by research libraries attached to modern universities, the capital of a National Library – usually derived from earlier book collections – lies in its prestige. No matter whether in India (Calcutta), South Africa (Cape Town), China (Beijing), or even disguised as in the Library of Congress (Washington, DC), national libraries are designed to enhance a nation-state's cultural status. Although fulfilling the essential role of

functioning as deposit libraries (collecting every book published under their territorial jurisdiction), they, like their predecessors in monarchic Europe, pride themselves on being the treasure house of their country's cultural capital, and they seek to foster a sense of communal belonging and national or ethnic integrity through their language literature. Although this might include, as in India, twenty-two different literary languages, a perusal of any National Library's mission statement will demonstrate the pride in a people's cultural achievement.

The Library of Congress serves as example when it refers to itself as "the nation's oldest federal cultural institution," which since "its founding on April 24, 1800, … has grown into the world's largest library, a treasure house of America's and the world's creativity" (http://www.loc.gov/about/). Having developed from Thomas Jefferson's private book collection, – which he sold in 1812 because he was short of cash (like French writer, philosopher, and chief editor of the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot) –, to 115 million items in all formats, the Library of Congress, like all national libraries, remains nevertheless "predicated on the basic" unit of national literature with its legacy of national discourse (Kadir 2004: 5). Moreover, insofar as cultural capital, because of the symbolic content from which it can never free itself altogether, entails both enhancement and resentment of a national and regional culture, libraries less well endowed economically, like, for instance, the National English Literature Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown, South Africa, contest moving the material left upon an author's death beyond its country's borders. Thus, financially strapped NELM competes with wealthier Californian institutions to retain what it considers the important literary heritage collection of Mazisi Kunene (1930–2006), foremost Zulu poet, translator, and indisputably one of Africa's finest poets. Losing the collection of an author commended by Casanova (2004: 268) for his bilingualism which "encourages a perpetual transit back and forth between [languages] and produces a succession of linguistic and national reappropriations," therefore means removal of evidence of a particular country's contribution to world literature, a removal made good only partially by today's web technology. (While that aids accessibility, digital reproduction willy-nilly reduces the material quality of books and papers, making them appear uniform in size and quantity).

For scholars and writers alike the library is "a working tool." That is how Italian novelist and literary scholar Umberto Eco (1994: 117) referred to his immense personal library when asked by an incredulous visitor why his house was filled with books. Eco's definition of the library chimes with Goethe's approving remarks concerning the contribution of the art historian J.J. Winkelmann to the "bibliophile" education of his aristocratic employers (Goethe 1959b: 113). Yet, outside library circles, except for the occasional acknowledgement of a librarian's assistance, the "tool" attains significance only by its absence, as comments made, for instance, by Möllendorff (1894) and Auerbach (1946) suggest. Separated by more than a generation and situated in geographically very distant sites, the sinologist Möllendorff, residing in Shanghai, and the comparatist Auerbach, exiled in Istanbul, reflect on their apparent "lack of a rich and specialized library" (Auerbach, 1953: 557; see Mufti in this volume). Such a library, they argue, might have improved their respective investigations into world literature from a comparative standpoint. But where Möllendorff relies confidently on his own private *Bibliothek* in order to

remedy the poverty of existing "lists" (Möllendorff (1894: v) that leave out "at least one quarter of the world's literature" (iii), Auerbach ambivalently misses "[i]nternational communications" and laments the absence of "technical literature and periodicals, with almost all the more recent investigations," not to mention the unavailability of "reliable critical editions of my texts" (Auerbach, 1953: 557), even as he famously notes that if he had had access to a large research library he might never have managed to write his book at all. Yet he did in fact have a research library containing a substantial number of scholarly sources, as well as a substantial personal collection of primary and secondary texts.

Two points arising from Möllendorff's introduction to his *Die Weltliteratur* (World Literature) and Auerbach's postscript to *Mimesis* confirm the value of the library as resource of writing and scholarly activity, irrespective of individual critical orientation. First, a well-stocked library constitutes the subterranean bedrock for any work in world literature. Only a large, extensive collection of books in different language literatures and their translations, together with books classified as "general literature" make it possible, for instance, to retrieve the "lost 99 percent of the archive and reintegrate it into the fabric of literary history," that Moretti suggests (2005: 77). "Larger networks of textual influence and broader structures of historical and social inscription which surround individual texts" (Cooppan 2001: 29) can come into view only in a representative library.

Secondly, while Auerbach's historical-philological discourse might seem more outdated today than Möllendorff's positivist, statistical method, both disciplinary procedures nevertheless speak to a particular social (research) space. That space might have been created and organized by the same historically mediated scholarly tradition and shared goal: the attempt to come to terms with what the English writer Ford Madox Ford (1938) called "the march of literature" on a global scale. Arrested in scriptural form, discursive practices thus join the record of scholarly thinking transmitted and made available for adoption – or rejection – in a good research library. Ideally, that library would cover – besides fiction in different languages and translations – in its section on "General Literature" as comprehensive an assembly of international critical work in world literature as is accessible in the language of a particular region's readership. An inventory of an ordered book collection like that of The Critical Theory Archive, attached to the Library of the University of California at Irvine, for instance, will tell of ways to approach world literature in theory and in (interpretative and reading) praxis.

Looking at a library's holdings through its inventory and subject catalogue with the eyes of sociologists such as Chartier (1989) and Martin (1994), historians like Darnton (2009), and literary historians like Moretti, who discuss the coming of the book, the social dimension of reading, and the literary field, we can tap into that "incalculable interest" of which Goethe spoke. Not for the sake of making yet another, more gigantic list on a global scale – Google with its mission "to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful" (http://books.google.com) [see Beebee in this volume] is providing that already – but to construct in cooperation with international scholars, from the inventories of the world's libraries, what I call an *indicative chronology* of the possible. Such a chronology would focus on the library as contact zone between different (language) cultures and their ideas on how to order the world; it would indicate, over long-term

continuities and across vast geographical distances, thresholds of condensation in the varied flows of world literature and the strategies that determine its traffic. Inventories and catalogues of book collections are also always records of appropriation and reappropriation, of the opening of new horizons of creative and intellectual investment, giving rise to new ways of thinking at specific junctions in history. There is no "real library, which is always somewhat impenetrable and at the same time uniquely itself" (Benjamin 1973: 63), that does not speak in its inventory to the way in which local cultures and traditions have engaged with, negotiated, and modeled the world beyond their own through the prism of books.

"The library is such an evocative setting," Battles (2003: 17) notes, "that it has become a cliché; what would a gothic mystery be without the library?" Eco's metafictional detective novel *The Name of the Rose* (Ital. original 1980), made into a blockbuster movie – not to mention the more recent *Da Vinci Code* – certainly confirms the setting's popularity. However, Eco's imagined monastic library gives a compelling image of the library, even if (in the words of Raven [2004: 32]), it is "made more to resemble the paradigm of the ancient library of Alexandria, of lamented memory," than of book collection in medieval times. Realizing that the library is a place of power, and a "vessel" equally for "falsehood and truth," Eco's character, the young novice Adso, perhaps not unwittingly alluding to Borges' "Library of Babel," affirms: "The library is a great labyrinth, sign of the labyrinth of the world" (Eco: 1984: 158). The library, the novel suggests further, is "then the place of a long centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing, a receptacle of powers not to be ruled by a human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, surviving the death of those who produced them or had been their conveyors. (Eco 1984: 286).

"Capital" circulates and flows not only in a single library; the "centuries-old murmuring" and dialogue between books can be made audible also when shuttling between different libraries across continents, as demonstrated by the narrator in Amitav Gosh's fictionalized, anthropological tale *In an Antique Land* (1994). Inspired and intrigued by a manuscript, "MS H.6" (Gosh 1994: 17), in Oxford's renowned Bodleian library, the narrator goes on a quest to find the name of an early twelfth-century slave. He spends considerable time in Egypt, where he eventually unravels the "intertwined histories, Indian and Egyptian, Muslim and Jewish, Hindu and Muslim" (339) in a collection of *Geniza* material in Cairo. The "term 'Geniza', a word that is thought to have come into Hebrew from a Persian root, ganj, meaning 'storehouse'," as Gosh (1994: 56–57) informs his reader, is, in Battles' words (Battle 2003: 193), a "container" signifying in "the rabbinical tradition … a kind of book tomb, a place in the synagogue where writings of all sorts are put when they are worn out." Unlike Goethe's, Eco's, and Montaigne's library, the Cairo Geniza is "a sly allegory on the intercourse between power and the writing of History" (Gosh 1994: 82); it is a supplementary space containing dispersed fragments of memory, first brought to the attention of orientalists in the nineteenth century. But even a subsidiary space, preserving as Gosh's narrator says, "the stories of Abraham Ben Yiju and his slave," Bomma, in "tiny threads, woven into the borders of a gigantic tapestry," (95) yields insight into "a group of people whose travels and breadth of experience and education seem astonishing even today, on a planet thought to be newly-shrunken" (55).

Digital technology has "shrunk" the world, indeed, and it has done so in a three-fold manner: first, the World Wide Web literally places the (virtual) library and, with it, global, multi-lingual, and translated world literature as a novel research space at our fingertips (see Beebee and Tötosy in this volume) – no more joyous "unpacking" of the library (Benjamin 1973) and searching on shelves and in stacks! Second, the information landscape has made reading machines (Kindles) available, which means, in Darnton's (2009: xiii) words, "that readers will cease to thumb through books." Finally, the internet enables the kind of international scholarly communications so sorely missed by Auerbach, who, had the world-changing electronic modes of communication been available to him, could have retrieved a great deal of "technical literature and periodicals" from the virtual library, unmoored from specific locations. But, like Darnton, he would have been skeptical about "bibliography, the principal tool for taking the measure of texts" (Darnton 2009: 33), being eclipsed in the digitized future of cyberspace. The virtual library poorly accounts for the "reliable critical editions" that Auerbach (1953: 557) missed or what Benjamin (1973: 60) refers to, citing Anatole France, as the "only exact knowledge there is," namely "the knowledge of the date of publication and the format of books."

Embracing "the eighteenth century," the Enlightenment's "faith in the power of knowledge, and the world of ideas" represented by the "Republic of Letters" open to all who want to join it, Darnton (2009: 4) does not deplore the digital environment that has now become a fundamental fact of life for millions of human beings. He sees neither the book in its printed, tactile format nor the familiar library – that "most archaic instrument of all" (Darnton 2009: xv) – disappearing anytime soon, although he is rightly concerned about the monopoly that Google exerts over the virtual library's digitalization (17–20). Libraries, in Darnton's words, "were never warehouses of books" but "have always been and always will be centers of learning" (xv). As sites encapsulating and recording specific flows of symbolic and cultural capital as well as offering tools with which to access it, libraries great and small, famous and almost forgotten, real, imagined, and virtual, are the receptacle of the world's scriptural memory. They are the place best suited to learning how to read the process of recording and recounting individual and collective encounters with the world, derived from and shaped by the commerce of books in different parts of the globe that together produce an increasingly connected cosmopolitan universe.

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# 32
# WORLD LITERATURE AND THE BOOK MARKET

*Ann Steiner*

In 2009, the most widespread books in the world were three crime novels by Swedish author Stieg Larsson and the four novels in American Stephenie Meyer's vampire series *Twilight*. These are examples of popular novels at the top of bestseller lists all over the globe – novels that travel across borders, cultures, and traditions – in translation as well as in the original language. It can be argued that this is an effect of multinational media conglomerates creating hype over literature that has little to do with what literary studies generally define as world literature. However, internationally spread texts are characterized by their great variety and cannot be dismissed as commercially produced mass-market literature, nor are they made up of a canon of highly advanced works. The international book trade is complex and offers numerous examples of simultaneous interactions and negotiations between literature, markets, readers, and national as well as global discourses.

The present chapter proposes that world literature is defined and propelled by the forces and structures of the book trade that are intersected by the media market. The concept of world literature, according to David Damrosch's definition, "works circulating beyond their culture of origin" (2003a: 4), has previously been applied primarily to literarily valuable fiction. I suggest, however, that if we take the full meaning of the notion and relate it to the actual contemporary book trade, a different, and conceivably disconcerting, image will emerge. I argue that world literature is conditioned by sale systems, publishing traditions, translations, government support, taxes, and everything else related to the economy of literature. The material, financial, and legal conditions determine which books can and will be exported as well as imported, and in that sense shape world literature. In the international and global trade, book sales, and reading are controlled by economics to a greater extent than when the world literature concept was proposed by Goethe in the early nineteenth century. Local and transnational companies producing and selling books determine what can be accessed, how it is marketed, and what many people read.

However, economic theories that have been applied to the book market and the global trade structures (e.g., Canoy et al. 2006) have proved inadequate to explain the full complexity of the production, distribution, and consumption of books. Various

studies have shown that books are different from other goods, and that the trade cannot be explained simply in terms of revenues, sales figures, and market niches. On the other hand, economic perspectives are useful in understanding recent developments in world literature. The large, transnational media conglomerates publishing and selling books today have influenced, and possibly dictated, the production and distribution of literature world-wide, for example through the internet, media convergence, production of literary spin-offs, and what, within the trade, is called "content development." These agents largely determine which literary works will travel across borders and become transnational. But book-market systems are not the same around the globe, and the publishing conglomerates do not control every part of the trade, which is, rather, a complex and often contradictory structure of domestic markets juxtaposed with international markets.

## Defining world literature and the market

There are three approaches to studying world literature in relation to the market. The first is to study how "great books" have traveled through time and space with the help of publishers, printers, translators, readers, and other agents in the book trade. In comparative literature and reception studies, international responses to certain authors or styles have been mapped out. Others have examined anthology production for university curricula within a certain area or time period. These are useful methods for gaining a deeper understanding of literary history or a particulars author's position, but they do little to clarify the overall picture of how world literature is disseminated and consumed on the market.

A second approach is to study the market for translations, as has been done by, for example, Johan Heilbron (1999). This approach should be developed by analyzing commercial aspects, e.g. how international business structures are managed, how publishing houses operate internationally, or the popularity of certain languages and cultures with respect to streams of translations. The world-wide system of translations and the balance between different languages are essential aspects of world literature.

A third possibility is to examine the book trade itself, and the specific titles that travel across borders and become world literature. Many of these novels are generic trade fiction, and the obvious question is whether or not crossing national borders is sufficient for a definition as world literature. Perhaps additional factors are required, such as literary influence or historical impact. Another issue that should be addressed is the concept of "world" in the global literary market-place. Very few works from, for example, China, India, or African nations reach Western Europe, and it could be argued that there is no such thing as a truly international book trade. With a focus on contemporary literature and publishing, the present chapter discusses transnational publishing and dissemination through translations, international distribution and sales, as well as international bestsellers. For this purpose, the definition of world literature is books and texts that travel across borders.

The concept of world literature has largely been defined in an American and British academic context, where literary studies are most often placed under the respective language departments, while more wide-reaching research and teaching are

termed comparative or world literature. Several publishing houses have compiled world literature anthologies for the English-language market. These are made up of canonized classics, with occasional Asian and African additions, e.g. *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* 1–6 (Lawall 2001–2). The anthologies and a few study guides on how to teach and read world literature have become the most important sources for the promotion of literature from other areas and times. Textbook publishing and a number of inexpensive paperback series of the classics have been driving forces in the dissemination of canonized works from different areas. The notion that world literature is to be constituted by "great books" has been challenged (Pizer 2000: 223–25; Pizer 2006: 109), however, and disregarding fiction that is more widely spread than the "great works" only serves to limit the concept.

Others have argued for a more inclusive notion of the concept that allows for studies of both an internationally canonized body of literature and of other kinds of texts (Thomsen 2008: 2); in order to be a useful idea, world literature has to be understood in its material, historical, and social context. My argument is largely based on Marxist definitions of world literature, according to which the spread of texts is stimulated by economic structures and powers. The original argument claimed that the changes in nineteenth-century intellectual production and consumption had resulted in world literature's replacing national literature (Marx and Engels 1888: 224). If, in an attempt to understand the relation between world literature and the market, fundamental materialist ideas are employed, factors such as publishing, distribution, and general economic circumstances have to be addressed.

Studying literature on the basis of its essential material conditions presents a different world map than does any study of dissemination of canonized fiction. The flows of popular fiction are not as predictable as one might think, but publishers are constantly trying to pin down possible successes, and current bestsellers influence future publishing and sales. It is true that mass-market literature rarely survives over time, but these texts can have a tremendous impact during a short period and are best observed through general patterns rather than single titles – as has been proposed by Franco Moretti, through a distant reading that provides the means to understand literary systems, rather than individual texts (2000).

## An abundance of books: publishing in the world

There has been a massive shift in international publishing structures since the 1960s, a change that can be compared only with the rise of the modern book trade in the late eighteenth century (Willison 2001: 574). Today, transnational media conglomerates control large sections of the printing, distribution, and marketing of contemporary literature, and the international book trade has erased not all, but many, of the boundaries between regions (Squires 2007).

A pivotal development in the book trade has been the rapid rise in book publishing, and it has been argued that over-publishing is the greatest threat to the trade. In 2009, there were around 120,000 titles published in the UK, 90,000 in Germany, 70,000 in India, 120,000 in Russia, 275,000 in the USA (although some of the UK and US titles are the same), and probably around 150,000 in China – but available

statistics are contradictory. Export, as these figures indicate, is necessary, and particularly the British, American, Spanish, French, and German book trades depend on a large international market. Former colonies, trade bonds, media ownership, and other kinds of channels link the publishing industries in different countries, at the same time as they consolidate the large media corporations with geographically extensive markets.

The general increase in titles poses a problem for many publishers, but no one wishes to diminish their own output. As Mexican author Gabriel Zaid has remarked, "[h]umankind writes more than it can read" (Zaid 2003: 30). The massive growth in titles has restructured global publishing, because it has become increasingly difficult to make a profit on publications within a single country and many large companies include the world market in their strategies. For example, British and American publishers are predominant in many countries in Africa and Asia (particularly countries that have not developed a sufficient national publishing industry of their own) and have substantial exports to other areas (Feather 2008: 125). The receding markets in the UK and USA have established an increasing export trend aimed at Europe and many other areas. However, not only English-language books are exported – Arabic, Spanish, German, and French literature also have wide international markets. Literature written in less widespread languages, such as Swedish, Polish, or Italian, also reaches an international readership through translations. The trend is that large, but also small, publishers operate on a much more international scale than they did twenty years ago. When it comes to prospective successes, such as the later books in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, in order to ensure sales of original versions publishers no longer release the manuscript for translation until the original has been published. For instance, the seventh book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007), sold 150,000 English copies in Sweden before the translation came out.

In the global book trade, large companies dominate publishing, the bestsellers, and the major part of translated works. The six leading media conglomerate publishers – Thomson, Pearson, Bertelsmann, Reed Elsevier, Wolters Kluwer, and Hachette Livre – hold large numbers and varieties of book-trade companies, including sales and technology. These six, and others similar to them, define world literature as a product that can be translated, repackaged, and sold to different markets. The effects of the globalization of literature can be described from different perspectives, and one is to map the structure of the publishing industry. The development during the past thirty years has been described in terms of "conglomeratization, content, and convergence" (Hemmungs Wirtén 2007: 395). Publishing houses throughout the world are growing larger and larger through mergers and acquisitions. The TMCs (transnational media conglomerates) have also bought into different kinds of sales channels and technological solutions (e-readers, Print-on-Demand systems, applications for iPhone etc.) to control distribution. The focus is on the principal asset, "the content," i.e. the fundamental idea of a text. Subsequently this is exploited in different media, for example, the Harry Potter story has been transferred into computer games, films, and cellphone applications.

The principal agents in the global book trade are these multinational corporations. Yet publishing is regionally specific. Differences in, for example, history, legislation,

language, and social structure mean that national book markets are specific in their construction. Obviously, there is a greater difference in the national trades between areas such as Europe and Asia. However, even a book market like the Chinese one has seen a trend toward publishing conglomerates and growing internationalization since the 2000s (Xin 2008). The general world-wide trend is occurring simultaneously with a developing diversity, even within limited regions such as Europe, where, for example, Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK have moved in very different directions during the ten years since 2000. Comparative studies of book trades are consequently methodologically complicated and uncommon. One of the few attempts is Miha Kovač's *Never Mind the Web* (2008), but unfortunately he does not resolve the issues. One difficulty is that statistical methods vary across countries and in many cases it is difficult, if at all possible, to extract the relevant facts.

A description of the international book trade in terms only of conglomerates gives one a sense of the rising commercialization of literature, but there are also positive effects of globalization, such as enhanced access to literature in the original foreign languages. Even though a strong Eurocentrism prevails, making literature from countries outside Western Europe hard to come by, things are changing. Today, internet stores like Amazon sell all over the world and many local internet bookstores also sell foreign-language books. For example, the two main Swedish internet stores each have over four million titles listed. Most of these are in English, less than 10 percent in Swedish and the rest in Danish, Norwegian, and German. In some ways this has strengthened the fear that global will mean only English, and being able to access a large part of the world's literature may not be particularly interesting if the global trend is toward conformity. Nevertheless, the future may turn out to be the very opposite, as the internet book trade does provide opportunities for distribution of a wider range of books.

The long tail, as outlined by Chris Anderson (2008) in his book of the same name, suggests a new and diverse book trade. According to Anderson, the long tail consists of the large number of titles sold in very small numbers on internet sites like Amazon. They offer much more diversity than regular bookstores, and Anderson argues that the tail proves that there is a demand for all sorts of books. If the sales of low sellers are combined, these will constitute a much larger market than the one provided by the bestsellers. Popularity, accordingly, no longer has a monopoly on profitability. Ever since 1995 and the launch of Amazon, a variety of online booksellers have influenced which books people can access. Furthermore, following the development of a large number of websites on which readers can discuss, write, and exchange ideas, the traditional hierarchies of the book trade have been overturned. BookCrossing, GoogleBooks, book blogs, pirated copies of e-books, cooperative writing communities, and fan fiction are a few novel phenomena that have changed what can be defined as world literature, as most of these are on global sites.

Not only book sales have shown a divergent development; publishing has also become fragmented and new kinds of entrepreneurship have emerged. One consequence of the large multinational publishers and their profit demands is that they do not take on works with a small readership. These are books that might sell 3,000 copies at a minor profit, which is not enough for a large publisher, but may be sufficient for a small company. Independent publishers are important, both because

they produce a substantial number of titles and also because they represent an invaluable cultural site for both domestic authors and translations.

## International reading cultures and bestsellers

The books spread internationally on a large scale fall mainly into two categories – textbooks and fiction. Educational texts are spread through specific companies and channels and will not be dealt with here. The circulation of fiction follows patterns that can be traced either through companies, as above, or through specific titles or authors. One accessible approach is to study bestseller lists and the titles sold in large numbers in different countries. One might object to this method, based on the fact that bestsellers have little to do with literary influence. However, studying bestseller lists provides a sense of the languages and geographical regions that succeed in reaching outside their national domain. On the contemporary market, a small number of global bestsellers represent an increasing proportion of the total book sales.

Bestseller lists are difficult to use, however, as they are compiled by commercial agents for a particular purpose and may therefore not provide reliable data. For example, there might be hidden, and open, ties between different agents within the book trade that can, and do, affect the content of and ranking on the lists (Miller 2000). Furthermore, such lists are compiled in a different manner, depending on the country. Despite these objections, however, bestseller lists can be examined as the result of the international market and dealings with literature.

I have studied bestseller lists of fiction from 2009 and early 2010 in France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, the UK, the USA, China, and Russia. There is not room here to present the full complexity of the sales structures or the variations across countries, titles and definitions. However, a few noticeable features will be discussed, the first being the apparent great national differences in the proportion of bestsellers that are translations. The debate over national/international literature in a country is often a consequence of how predominant translations are. For example, the US lists show a clear lack of translations, as well as of English-language literature from outside the country. Accordingly, in the USA, foreign fiction is regarded as less commercial and more intellectually challenging than it is in places where the pattern of sales is the opposite. In countries like Spain, foreign titles completely dominate the top-selling fiction, with the full year 2009 list showing ten out of ten titles in translation (the early 2010 lists are more diverse, including three domestic titles). Like the USA, China, with its strong domestic literary production and one of the largest markets in the world, has only occasional translated titles at the top (Meyer's *Twilight* and Brown's *The Lost Symbol*). Apart from countries with a strong national body of literature, most lists display a mix of domestic and translated literature, e.g., Germany, France, and Russia.

The UNESCO *Index Translationum*, which keeps track of international book translations, shows that English is the main target language, by a wide margin. This is the case in terms of numbers of translations; for example, the proportion of translated fiction in Sweden is 50 percent and within this more than half of titles are from

the English language (Carlsson and Facht 2010: Tables 4.15 and 4.6). However, the bestseller lists show that English titles may not always sell as easily as they are translated. Many publishers are comfortable in the English language – it is easy to read and evaluate, and this is a competence that they often lack in other languages. The social and cultural codes are also regarded as less complicated, and herein lies part of the explanation for the large number of English translations. However, many publishing houses have realized that translations are a risk, as they tend to sell less and less. In the case of Sweden, only two out of the top ten fiction titles were translations. No matter what some critics say about the global dominance of the English language, it is not visible in book-buying patterns.

Overall, a somewhat surprising conclusion based on the bestseller lists is that English-language literature does not dominate the globe. A similar study of bestsellers in Europe was made based on lists from 2008 and 2009 (Kovač and Wischenbart 2009), and it shows comparable findings. Among the top forty titles, only 30 percent were written by English-speaking authors, while a small country like Sweden (due to the success of a number of crime fiction authors) had eight titles. Only two of the most popular authors in 2008–9 wrote in English (including Khaled Hoesseini, who is of Afghan origin, but excluding authors writing all-age fiction, such as J.K. Rowling). The pan-European adult fiction bestseller was written in a language other than English. The Swedish crime fiction author Stieg Larsson, mentioned in the introduction, is an illuminating example, showing that international success is more often linked to genre than to language.

Among the publishers of bestsellers there is great diversity, as they are made up of a mixture of independent small companies, trade publishers, and media conglomerates (Kovač and Wischenbart 2009: 124). Looking beyond the bestsellers, we see an even more diversified publishing industry. In particular, the development of digital technology, for example Print-on-Demand, e-books and digital files for MP3 audiobooks, has enhanced the pluralism of publishing.

## National vs. global markets and literatures

There is a divide between commercial, internationally successful literature and the national literature that rarely makes its way across borders. There are two parallel movements – one that is locally positioned and one that is globally oriented. These are contrasting and sometimes conflicting, yet each is a consequence of the other. In many countries, domestic literature is part of the national consciousness, whatever ideological implications this may have. The elevated, canonized authors, as well as contemporary popular literature, make up a body of national cultural treasures. The desire for a strong national literature can be seen as a reaction to foreign influences, and many countries support domestic literature financially. National funding, scholarships, tax breaks, government support to publishers or authors are a few examples of how local literature is protected.

There is a widespread idea that national literature is somehow in opposition to world literature but, as Damrosch argues, "[n]ationalism and internationalism are inextricably intertwined today" (Damrosch 2003b: 328). The negotiation between the

local and the international is often both textual and material. In mapping out the international book trade of world literature, one useful concept is the slightly misused term "glocal". Literature is produced in a local context, but is often also sold and distributed globally. Texts are recontextualized, reinterpreted, and in many cases used as trademarks for "Swedish," "French," or "Indian." For instance, Swedish author Stieg Larsson, who has been on all the bestseller lists in Europe, is not seen as a typically Swedish author in his own country, where his work's affinities with British and American crime fiction have been stressed in the critique. Even though the stories take place in Stockholm and other identifiable places around the country, it is not regarded as fiction that depicts Swedish national characteristics. However, outside the country, Larsson's work has been received and read as relating an image of contemporary Sweden – a nation that is no longer the welfare state it could once boast to be (e.g., Fraser 2009).

The aim of the present chapter has been to provide an insight into the influence of the book trade on world literature. Translations, the publishing industry, and the global trade in books shape what people read. The most common category on the bestseller list is popular trade fiction, which varies greatly in linguistic origin. However, the influence of commercial interests on world literature has given readers access to books from all over the world, although there is a tendency toward Anglo-American dominance. A final point is that the world book trade is made up of a combination of enormous media companies and a myriad of small publishers, Print-on-Demand, online internet publications and other ways for literature to spread beyond borders.

In studying agency in the literary market-place, it is apparent that the traditional disciplinary boundaries are a constraint. Within literary studies, agency is usually placed in the hands of the author, in the text, or with the reader. But in order to map out how literature intersects with the world market, other approaches are necessary. Publishers, booksellers, distributors, etc., are important agents in the literary world and they shape, determine, and control literature. In 1827, Goethe said that national literatures no longer meant a great deal (Eckermann 1959: 174), and although his prediction was correct in some respects, locally produced texts are still indispensable. However, analysis of world literature on the market has shown that national fiction does compete with international works. Popular fiction travels, and although there are great differences across countries, many titles reach well beyond their national borders.

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# 33
# WORLD LITERATURE, *FRANCOPHONIE*, AND CREOLE COSMOPOLITICS[1]

*Françoise Lionnet*

World literature, *Weltliteratur*, *littérature-monde*: these linguistic equivalents, in English, German, and French, respectively, connote different understandings of "literature" and "world," each linked to specific historical and critical trends. Ever since Goethe first used it in 1827, *Weltliteratur* has meant openness to the world's great literary traditions and cosmopolitan familiarity with great books, in the original or in translation. More recent in its general usage, the English "world literature" first acquired pedagogical purchase with the late-twentieth-century broadening of English studies to include post-imperial and postcolonial or Commonwealth writing in English. But in the United States academy, the term now coincides for comparatists with Goethe's original cosmopolitan meaning, as a result of the interventions of critics such as Franco Moretti (2000), David Damrosch (2003), and Gayatri Spivak (2003), whose promotion of a planetary approach to writing and canonicity shapes current developments in the field.

The French expression *littérature-monde,* by contrast, came to prominence as a result of a controversial 2007 manifesto directed against the use of the term *francophonie* and signed by forty-four writers of varying renown and origin, many of them Francophone, that is, users of the French language whose cultural, ethnic or national origins happen to be from outside of the French hexagon. By setting up an opposition between *francophonie* and *littérature-monde*, the manifesto gave into an old assimilationist agenda that promotes the integration of the larger Francophone world of letters into a very Parisian understanding of writing as a monolingual activity that seeks to embrace "les voies du monde" [the ways of the world] (*Le Monde* 2007), but in order to make them fit into the world Republic of Letters as defined and understood by a universalizing French perspective (Lionnet 2009).

Far from promoting openness to the "world," the manifesto "Pour une littérature-monde en français" is an unwitting avatar of a nineteenth-century nationalist tradition that reinforces the centrality of Paris and its local intellectuals as the legitimating agents of global literary excellence and success. To be fair to the manifesto's authors and signatories, their stated wish is to promote the diversity of cultural outlooks that

writers from outside the borders of France bring to the field of French-language letters. But their desire to bury the concept of *francophonie* in favor of a *littérature-monde* anchored in monolingual sensibilities by-passes one of the founding concepts of Francophone criticism, that of "palimpsestic writing," an expression that defines the bi- or multilingual strategies of postcolonial authors.

French is present on all continents and practiced by two hundred million speakers, but only a fraction of them (primarily those living in France) are monolingual. A palimpsest under the pen of the Francophone writers who wrestle with it, transform it, and keep it polyphonically alive, French bears the traces of its innumerable encounters with other oral and written traditions. When produced by writers whose everyday lives are awash in multilingual environments, Francophone literature is a vehicle that raises to a new global level its readers' awareness of a long-standing philological feature of literary language, namely, its polysemy, as well as the distinct subjective dynamics of writers whose textured creativity exists in a "minor" mode (Deleuze and Guattari 1975, Derrida 1996, Donadey 2000, Gauvin 1999, Lionnet 1991, Medded 1985, Zabus 1991). More than half a century after Erich Auerbach first proclaimed that "our philological home is the earth: it can no longer be the nation" (Auerbach 1969: 17), a statement variously echoed in the works of Edward Said and Edouard Glissant, the manifesto's authors appear surprisingly indifferent to the intricate palimpsestic layerings of linguistic codes and rhetorical practices that are the philological hallmark of many postcolonial and Francophone texts.

The way in which internally other and culturally diverse influences get incorporated into language and literature has, however, become the object of greater scrutiny, thanks to comparative studies of French and Francophone literatures that highlight borrowings and cross-fertilizations. Cultural interferences can create, in Lise Gauvin's words, linguistic hyperawareness or the *surconscience linguistique* common to minority writers who work the language *over*, transforming it through a creative practice that is nourished by their multilingual sensibilities (Gauvin 2000: 8). The *créolistes* of the Caribbean argue that "L'exigence première de l'acte littéraire" consists in "savoir produire un langage au sein même de la langue" [the first requirement of literary creation … is to be able to bring about a language within the tongue itself] (Bernabé et al. 1989: 46; 1990: 900). Edouard Glissant speaks of the living presence of the "imaginaire" of all languages, which undoes the possibility of writing as if one were simply monolingual (Glissant 1996: 112). The Moroccan Abdelkebir Khatibi insists, "French is not French: it is more or less all the internal and external languages that make it up as well as break it up," [*qui la font et la défont*], and that infuse it with a multiplicity of echoes (Khatibi 1983: 188). To speak of *littérature-monde* in French ought to mean taking into account the way internal differences have existed alongside and undermined patriotic understandings of a "True France," a notion that implies the (mythical) existence of a core of stable values guaranteeing continuity in the ideal narrative of an authentically French cultural and linguistic identity (Lebovics 1994). Multilingual traces and echoes are present not just in well-known Francophone texts from the Maghreb or the Caribbean: they were already evident in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works of Pierre-Corneille Blessebois, Moreau de Saint-Méry or Bernardin de Saint-Pierre; in the nineteenth-century poetry of Baudelaire, the Mauritian tales collected in 1887 by Charles Baissac, and the imaginative recreation of Reunion Island by George Sand in *Indiana*.[2]

This essay focuses on these internal heterogeneities as an *other* way of understanding "world literature." Rather than referring to a history of discrete world masterpieces from distinct cultural and linguistic traditions that can circulate through translation, *francophonie* indexes both a creolized space of literary production and a language that carries many allophone traces. These traces echo and translate the tangled cultural dynamics of colonial and postcolonial contact zones, the longstanding existential conditions of the multilingual citizens of European border zones and border states (Belgium, Switzerland, or Romania), or the sensibilities of contemporary artists and writers living in creolized global cities. I will look here at such historical processes of cultural mixing, starting with the insights of the early nineteenth-century comparatist Jean-Jacques Ampère. I will then consider the paradoxical history and geography of literary *francophonie* in light of what Scott Malcomson terms the "actually existing cosmopolitanisms" (Malcomson 1998: 239) that differ from traditional ideals of cosmopolitan detachment, and that I propose to link to the shared realities and multidirectional lives of Francophone and Creole colonial or postcolonial writers.[3]

## *Littérature-monde* and its triages

A vigorously cosmopolitan strain has run through French intellectual and cultural life since the Enlightenment; but the history of the nation's engagement with otherness, understood as an outside that is also internal to its borders and to its linguistic system, has not been easy to acknowledge, let alone deal with, whether in academic, popular, or political circles. The present moment of *mondialisation* invites us to consider what a specifically French idea of the global in literature might imply, what processes of worlding have been in place since colonial times, and what role *francophonie* plays today in the constitution of such cosmopolitan sensibilities and shifting articulations of the particular and the universal, the national and the transnational. By foregrounding what a nationalist literary history overlooks in the canonical texts themselves or in what Franco Moretti calls "powerful literatures" (Moretti 2000: 65), it becomes possible to draw attention to the external Francophone influences on writers from the metropolitan center whose creative practice is striated by the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism, the ecology of the tropics, or the idioms of creolization, but in whose works these internal differences have often been ignored or simply indexed as "exotic" (Lionnet 2010).

To look at seventeenth-, eighteenth- or nineteenth-century texts from the perspective of smaller or insular margins means not being as concerned as Moretti is with the way a "powerful" text from the so-called "core" intersects with and asymmetrically alters literary production from the continental "peripheries" of Africa, Asia, or Latin America (Moretti 2000: 56). It is to focus instead on patterns of influence that show how a Francophone writer's linguistic or generic "foreign debt" to an author from the core actually enables a new vision of the core and *its* linguistic debt to the periphery, thus undoing Moretti's model of two distinct and hierarchized poles, with "waves" of influence that originate in one place only. To re-read the canon from the angle of vision provided by Francophone writers means

underscoring what Sherry Simon terms the "brouillage culturel" or cultural mixing that already existed in earlier texts.[4] It also means focusing on a different, less-traveled path that results in the creolization of the *national* literary landscape, and in the destabilization of traditional categories of identity, cultural identification, and literary periodization.

A useful point of departure for this approach is the figure of Jean-Jacques Ampère, the first to introduce the term "littérature comparée" in France. A noted contributor to the controversial newspaper *Le Globe*, he was an early advocate of a global approach to French literature, and a believer in its fundamental heterogeneity. He adopted the cosmopolitan ideals of the French *philosophes* as well as those of Goethe.[5] As a reader of *Weltliteratur* and friend of Mme de Staël, Mme de Récamier, and Tocqueville, Ampère demonstrates relative openness to difference. But his views were obscured by the late-nineteenth-century work of Gustave Lanson, whose 1894 *Histoire de la littérature française* spun a doctrine known as *lansonisme*, more extreme than what the eminent historian had intended, that served to promote reason and *l'esprit français* as the primary, patriotic, and "nationalist goal of civic education" well into the second half of the twentieth century (Wolff 2001: 248). Ampère deserves attention as a salutary and instructive alternative to *lansonisme* and to the chauvinist trends that continue to plague the postcolonial Fifth Republic with its "national identity" project and the aborted debates that it tried to launch on this question in 2010.

In Ampère's inaugural speech, on 14 February 1834, as the newly elected chair of the history of French literature at the Collège de France, he foregrounds his version of the multiculturalism that is an integral part of the fabric of history: "There is a whole portion of our literary tradition the origin and end-point of which are outside of us" (Ampère 1834: 418), and that Gérard Noiriel would call the French melting pot (Noiriel 1988). Promoting an open stance rather than a narrow national one, Ampère suggests that literary history must be viewed according to "a broader perspective than the one used most often" (Ampère 1834: 417). He surveys the evolution of genres and modes of representation, and recognizes the essential cosmopolitanism of literary activity over the centuries. He uses a paternalistic Orientalist rhetoric to paint a humorous and affectionately critical picture of the French nation's tendency to appropriate what is foreign, and the foreign nations' apparent gratitude toward France:

> France … is not like China, a country isolated behind its great wall. … France is a curious and easy nation, and although a bit vain and condescending, she listens, half-smiling and half-delighted, to the tales from foreign countries; then she re-tells them her way, according to her own disposition, her brisk and lively mood, her clear and loud voice with the logical, determined, and even cutting tone for which she is notorious but forgiven. And these foreign nations are then willing to take back from France the treasures they had given, because after she has made her mark on those stories, they acquire the value [*le titre*] that renders them fit to circulate in the market of ideas [*qui les rend propres à la circulation et au commerce des idées*].

> It is the honor of French literature that her history is linked to that of all Europe, and through the Arabs, the Jews, and the Crusades, to that of the Orient. France is the heart of Europe, she receives the blood that arrives from all the parts of this great body and pumps it back to its extremities, more colorful and revitalized: a circulation that has always existed and is more active than ever today.
>
> (417–18)

Ampère's rhetorical gestures, though patronizing, are the legacy of the cosmopolitan ideals of his time and intellectual circles. In his organic model of tolerant exchanges, France incorporates with delight stories from abroad, then retells and revivifies them in her signature style, thus increasing their value and legitimacy within a global system of cultural circulation. That system, with France at its center, is presented as a living organism that thrives on the appropriation and transformation of the fables and supplements that come from its furthest reaches. By stamping these "foreign" traditions with her label or guarantee of quality, France underwrites the recognition and the prestige that gets attached to them. This accelerates their recirculation in global cultural and intellectual spheres. France thus guides a process of mutual cross-fertilization that generates important new forms of enlightenment.

Ampère also notes that the free circulation he promotes "deplaît à certains esprits" [bothers some people] (418); he writes this three years into Louis-Philippe's repressive reign and the July Monarchy, and two years after the banning of the liberal and Saint-Simonist *Le Globe,* which had promoted utopian socialist and anti-monarchic views. But he remains confident that cosmopolitan ideas will continue to flow freely, and that "the generous heart of Europe [i.e. France] will not stop beating and throbbing" (418). Intent on encouraging the *rapprochement* and study of all cultures, he asserts, "to broaden one's perspective by means of comparative work is to ascend from the observation of one's surrounding objects to that of the globe, and from the spectacle of the globe to the contemplation of all universes" (419). He invites his audience to reject sectarianism in favor of a reasoned appreciation of literary value within a rational global frame.

He also insists, however, on a more *ir*rational or romantic element, a mysterious and innately French faculty "that is hard to define, and that cannot be denied": good taste (420). With this appeal to "le goût français," he reintroduces aesthetic hierarchy into his pedagogical project, and announces Lanson's strict emphasis on masterpieces as instances of French "grand goût" (Lanson 1912: 17). Literary appreciation, he argues, must be acquired through education of the judgment of taste, even if taste is something ineffable and indefinable: "Le goût, c'est la conscience délicate du beau" (420) [taste is the subtle understanding of beauty]. It is characterized by the ability to be at once bold and graceful. It is "un sentiment mâle autant que délicat" (421) [an aptitude both male and refined] that implies a fundamentally androgynous and spontaneous grasp of beauty. This ability or "sentiment" can and should be cultivated.

Ampère's detour via the global or the universal thus serves to reinforce a "delicate" and entirely French ideal of beauty already consecrated in the "heart" of the system, an ideal that filters the best of what has been thought and expressed on a

global scale. His philosophy of literary history presupposes neither indiscriminate inclusiveness nor weak forms of relativism. He suggests instead that a properly understood and comprehensive approach requires openness to what is "other" coupled with an intuitive ability "to recognize genius and to revere it" (421). He concludes with a call in favor of intellectual freedom, independence, and continuity in this particularly troubling period of the 1830s during which, as he puts it, France is experiencing something like "an intermission in the great social drama that began in [17]89" (425).

Ampère believes in the social function of literature as a beacon of truth and progress in dark times. His emphasis on the global centrality of France, with its unique sense of "taste" and its cosmopolitan interests, suggests that he has an acute understanding of the hierarchies that are constitutive of the sphere of legitimacy. In this sense, he is the precursor of contemporary sociologists of literature, from Pierre Bourdieu (1979) to Franco Moretti (2000), Pascale Casanova (1999), and James English (2005), who study the importance of literary capital, a prestigious "center" or metropole, and the distinction bestowed by a coveted award or literary prize in the creation of global culture. Texts that are granted universal recognition in the center thereby acquire the symbolic capital that encourages their recirculation within the world Republic of Letters. Recognition by that center confers distinction on a select few, and includes them in the symbolic transactions that reinforce the unequal distribution of value as well as how this value structures the field of literary history. For Casanova too, the transfer of literary capital remains mediated by Paris as a symbolic, editorial, and financial hub that enshrines the hierarchical stratification of writers from the periphery within an economy of domination and dependence that is indeed constitutive of the internal dynamics of what remains (for her) the autonomous domain of the literary: "Paris has a two-fold claim on the universal: because it believes in its own universality, and because of the real effects produced by this belief" (Casanova 1999: 50). Where Ampère is content to advocate in favor of critical expertise carefully cultivated through pedagogical means and spiked with an intuitive dose of taste, Casanova believes that Paris will maintain its monopoly on legitimacy and taste, and that it will continue to absorb within an autonomous literary space many ex-centric international writers, especially Francophone ones, although Paris's role today has been overtaken by New York's global cultural prominence. To different degrees, Ampère and Casanova both focus on the same process: the means by which selection or classification generates a canon and elevates certain titles to the rank of the global, a process of triage that has been central to ideologies of exclusion, but that can often be masked or naturalized under cover of aesthetic judgment or false standards of objectivity.

As an institution, French literature remains part of the disciplinary formation that furthers secular and nationalist goals, but it increasingly relies on diverse and peripheral global sites of cultural production and on pedagogical protocols that give centrality and visibility to voices and writing practices that have transformed the field into a truly transnational arena, even if Paris remains its symbolic, editorial, and financial hub. The 2007 manifesto simultaneously acknowledges *and* interrogates the role of Paris as universal model and inevitable principle of mediation. By declaring, in Paris, that the center is now everywhere, it stresses the capital's debt to the

periphery, but reinforces by the same token the city's role as a site of cultural prestige that can grant distinction and visibility to writers in accordance with the regulatory principles of literary modernity, with their well-established systems of coveted awards. It affirms the *fact* of the existing denationalization of literature, and gestures toward the aesthetic and social consequences of this transformation. But it also reduces the idea of world literature to what exists in print in French: *littérature-monde en français* and thus exposes a much more serious struggle over historical legacies, making more visible the presence of a long-standing epistemological problem, one that revolves around contested notions of the "literary," especially with regard to the textures of linguistic practice and the aesthetic choices they presuppose. Such questions have far-reaching consequences with regard to institutional arrangements and the power of these arrangements to refigure the relationship between not just language and culture, but also literature and identity, unity and multiplicity, colonial pasts and racialized presents.

## *Francophonie* and Creole cosmopolitics

The basic common-sense understanding of the term "Francophone" is a purely linguistic one: those who use the French language. But by that definition, Eugene Ionesco (Romania), Ahmadou Kourouma (Ivory Coast), and Khal Torabully (Mauritius) would all belong together in a category that would simply serve to set them apart from a nationalist understanding of French literature, an understanding that readily absorbs Ionesco into the pantheon of French authors, but not Kourouma or Torabully. The appropriation and assimilation of non-hexagonal authors goes back centuries: but no one ever called the Swiss Jean-Jacques Rousseau a "Francophone" writer; nor does the 2008 Nobel Prize winner, J. M. G. Le Clézio, born in Nice during World War II and raised first in what was then the Italian-occupied border region of France, later in Nigeria, usually count as "Francophone." But in point of actual fact, he is the offspring of a Mauritian family with roots in Brittany that had emigrated to the then Ile de France (now Mauritius) in the eighteenth century. Rousseau, Ionesco, and Le Clézio count among what can, without controversy, be called "canonical" figures within the French tradition, even if their respective lineages suggest *francophonie* rather than a strictly hexagonal understanding of literary history.

One of the rare poetic movements of the prose-rich eighteenth century, a movement that helped to renew the genre and opened the way for both Romanticism and Symbolism, is an all-but-forgotten group of three Francophone Creole poets: two from the island of Reunion, Evariste Parny and Antoine Bertin, and one from Guadeloupe, Nicolas Germain Léonard. They travelled to and worked together in Paris, as soldiers in the king's army, and as libertine poets and members of a literary salon, *La Caserne*. Parny and Bertin went on to Boston and New Orleans, Haiti, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, and India. Parny had a lasting impact on Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Baudelaire, Ravel (who put his *Chansons madécasses* to music), and especially Pushkin, who considered him his favorite poet. Baudelaire, who is seldom forthcoming about his sources, confesses, in March 1846 in a letter to his

sister-in-law, Félicité, that his ambition is to follow in the footsteps of "a Petrarch or a Parny" (Baudelaire 1973: 135). But there exist no studies of Baudelaire that investigate the link between his brand of erotic lyricism and Parny's 1778 *Poésies érotiques* about a young Creole woman from the same island that Baudelaire visited in 1841. Parny's 1787 *Chansons madécasses* are considered the first examples of French *poèmes en prose*, and hence also inaugurate a genre that Baudelaire would perfect in *Le Spleen de Paris*. Parny's iconoclastic rhetoric and his abolitionist sympathies eventually caused him to fall into disfavor among later writers and critics, although Hegel, Balzac, Flaubert, and Proust found reasons to mention his diverse writings.

In the United States, the most recent critical studies on the literature and culture of the slave trade make no mention of these eighteenth-century poets' early denunciations of black servitude and their pointed understanding of slavery's role in shoring up Enlightenment ideologies, although essays published in the early 1930s by the comparatist Edward D. Seeber forcefully stress their contributions to anti-slavery opinion (Seeber 1934, 1935).

Whereas Rousseau and Le Clézio are classified by readers and critics as French, most likely because their individual identities are racially unmarked and they thus easily fit into a common-sense "national" understanding of Frenchness, the rare French literary anthologies that do include Parny hasten to characterize him as a *Creole* poet, thus marking him as different and "other" (Tadié et al., 2007). By contrast, for Slavicists and Russianists who have come to know and appreciate him via Pushkin's writings (Wachtel 2006), Parny is simply one of the minor *French* poets of the eighteenth century. In general, one can state that all non-white, non-hexagonal writers tend to be defined by circumlocutions. André Breton felt obliged to refer to Aimé Césaire as a "grand poète noir" (not as "un grand poète français") and Wikipedia describes Maryse Condé as a "French-language author of historical fiction" not as a French author *tout-court*. Césaire and Condé are citizens from Martinique and Guadeloupe, respectively. But they continue to be classified, in anthologies, reference works, and on bookstore shelves, in the "ghetto" of non-white authors from outside the hexagon, which can also include numerous Francophone *non-citizens* from Senegal, Vietnam, Algeria, and some four-dozen other multilingual countries.

A bit like the Commonwealth, which is an association of fifty-three independent states, most of them from the former British colonial empire, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) is an association of fifty-five member states, thirty-two of which use French as one official language, while in fourteen others French is simply one language among several; the OIF's motto, echoing with a significant difference that of the French Republic, is "égalité, complémentarité, solidarité." The OIF is a truly global organization that encourages cooperation in the areas of culture, science, economy, justice or peace. That is its official role. To the extent that one of its goals is to offer serious resistance to the imperium of "global English," it provides a creolized space and a forum where alternative histories, viewpoints, and cultural priorities can be opposed to the neo-liberal encroachments of a predatory globalism. In that space, Francophone and Creolophone writers can experiment with the patterns of appropriation and transplantation, translation and borrowing that are characteristic of their multidirectional lives and existential cosmopolitanisms. This existential condition indexes a more *inclusive* universal culture, not the age-old

French practice of elevating a dominant particular to the status of the universal (Lionnet 1998a, 2009).

In their collective volume on *Cosmopolitics*, Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins offer approaches useful for theorizing what I would like to call a more inclusive *creolized* universality. Pheng Cheah reads Kantian cosmopolitanism as a crucial turning-point in eighteenth-century history: when "moral politics or political morality needs to be formulated beyond the polis or state form, the point at which 'the political' becomes, by moral necessity, 'cosmopolitical'" (Cheah 1998: 23). Cheah stresses Kant's importance "for normative theories of international relations, including accounts of global civil society and the international public sphere" (Cheah 1998: 23), but this vision can be just as useful when theorizing *internal* multiplicities, those that exist within the very borders of the transnational or creolized zones of the Francophone world. Bruce Robbins suggests that a twenty-first-century engagement with theories of contact and movement must focus on the fact that "instead of an ideal of detachment, actually existing cosmopolitanism is a reality of (re)attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance" (Robbins 1998: 3). What I am proposing is that what might be termed, after Cheah and Robbins, a cosmopolitical *creole* condition is shared by a majority of Francophone colonial and postcolonial writers from the eighteenth century on, from Evariste Parny to J.M.G. Le Clézio, Maryse Condé, or Ananda Devi, for whom writing opens a narrative and poetic space that allows for a more complex understanding of relations of power beyond the simple binarisms of postcolonial discourses.

Thus, one of the points that must be stressed but cannot be fully developed here is that the conceptual relation between terms such as "cosmopolitan" and "Creole" needs to be seriously re-examined. If "cosmopolitan" evokes a certain elite culture of travel and sophistication that can readily be contrasted with nationalism and parochialism, creolization on the other hand tends to remain a devalued and misunderstood phenomenon, in large part because of its association with slavery and the so-called pidgins and *patois* that developed as a result of a history of contact and exploitation. As the MIT linguist Michel Degraff eloquently explains in his work on "the fallacy of Creole exceptionalism," Creole languages and cultures are stigmatized as a result of prevalent nineteenth-century views shaped by the same racism that undergirds colonial expansion, slavery, and social abjection:

> Slavery and race theories at the colonial inception of Creole studies would have made it impossible – or "unthinkable" – to consider Caribbean Creole languages on a genealogical or structural par with European languages. After all, Creoles were by and large perceived as languages created by slaves. In order to justify slavery, the Africans had to be equated to "lesser" human beings belonging to a separate and inferior species. And it was inconceivable that these lesser humans could speak full-fledged human languages.
>
> (Degraff 2005: 547)

As a result, the negative valences that remain attached to the very idea of creolization continue to impede the development of useful theoretical conversations among scholars of cosmopolitanism and those who study Creole realities. The fictions that

abound around the idea of creolization make it a formidable challenge to bring together Creole and cosmopolitan concepts. But such a *rapprochement* is overdue, and developing more complex understandings of a creolized "world literature" would be a good way to start mapping and comparing the intellectual work that each concept can do, separately and in tandem.

## Notes

1 All translations are mine unless otherwise specified. This chapter is a modified version of approaches developed in Lionnet (2009, 2010).
2 For instructive readings of Blessebois and Moreau de Saint-Méry, see Garraway (2005). She suggests that "Blessebois's work may very well contain the earliest appearance of the word 'zombi' in any European language" (Garraway 2005: 178). For Baudelaire, see Lionnet (1998b, 2008). For Baissac, see Haring (2007).
3 I use Rothberg's term for memory considered "as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (Rothberg 2009: 3). His concept can be applied just as well to patterns of creolization.
4 Simon writes: "The shattered text, penetrated by otherness, is one of the modes of expression of cultural mixing … ; it forces us to rethink the correspondence between literature and cultural identity" (Simon 1994: 19).
5 Ampère was the son of the famed mathematician and physicist André-Marie Ampère, who discovered electromagnetism and gave his name to the unit of measurement of power in electrical current.

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# 34
# WORLD LITERATURE AND POPULAR LITERATURE
## Toward a wordless literature?

*Jan Baetens*

Seducing and alluring as it may be, the alleged opposition between world literature and popular literature is too simplistic, if not blatantly false, first of all for genealogical reasons. From the very moment that the notion of world literature surfaced into public debate, Goethe made a strong plea for taking into consideration the role and place of popular works (see the essay by John Pizer in this volume). Not that Goethe was in favor of broadening the international canon to non-canonical, popular works – on the contrary; but his sharp awareness of the intertwining of the cultural, the political, and the economic brought him to prophesy the rapid spread of mass-oriented material in a post-national (post-Napoleonic) world in which political and economic exchanges would jeopardize the age-old closure of national cultures. Goethe, in this regard, was far ahead of what has for a long time been seen as an almost universal truth in our thinking about world literature and popular literature, whose opposition still seems dramatic, some might even say absolute. The former designates works, themes, and authors that have successfully crossed the borders of their political and/or linguistic homeland to become part of the cultural heritage of all mankind (the basic distinction here is *national* versus *international* or, to put it in more modern terms, *local* versus *global*). The latter refers to works, themes, and authors that address a very large audience, and that have often been crafted and invented to cater to the taste (that is the "bad taste") of the masses (the basic distinction here is *high* and *low*, *good* and *bad*, *art* and *folklore*, *culture* and *commerce*, etc.). Not only are world literature and popular literature antagonistic terms – the one bearing inevitably Arnoldian overtones, the other proudly or shamefully exhibiting its less sophisticated roots – but the very core of their respective systems is anything but comparable. In world literature it is, in the final analysis, *quality* that matters, and its key values are called originality, complexity, closure, autonomy, personality, multilayeredness, timelessness, and so on. In popular literature the magic word is, rather, *quantity*, and its credo is a cluster of values gathering notions such as surprise or novelty (which is not necessarily innovation, for one can perfectly well create

something new by reusing something once new that had fallen into oblivion), format and genre (and, on a more micro-stylistic level, formulaic writing), sensationalism and voyeurism (in popular literature, subject matter is not a detail, and the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction, literature and life, private and public, is paramount in this regard), and finally heteronomy (the enemy here is art for art's sake; popular fiction must address concrete and material aims: to sell, either by amusing or by shocking or frightening).

Besides this first, slightly anecdotal reason, there is, however, a second one, more historically encompassing and epistemologically uprooting, that has to do with the deconstruction of the classic reading of the "popular." In the Western tradition, with its sharp distinction between folk art and popular culture (Storey 2001), popular literature is often described as "industrial literature," a term coined by the French critic and literary historian Sainte-Beuve in 1839 to analyze one of the Industrial Revolution's most far-reaching consequences for the printing industry, the appearance of a literature that is no longer author driven, but purely market oriented (Sainte-Beuve 1996). Instead of seeing the book as the vehicle of strong and challenging ideas, as "real" literature should do, industrial literature falls prey to commercialism and rejects all traditional standards of taste and quality in order to make a return on investment. More contemporary views, though, have criticized the mythical and mystifying distinction between high art and popular culture. On the one hand, it has been observed that many innovations that are seemingly typical of high-art, elite modernist culture have been triggered by transformations in the sphere of popular and industrial culture (Suarez 2007). On the other hand, it has been no less underlined that the commercial aims and underpinnings of industrial literature are far from being absent from numerous ostensibly literary and cultural enterprises that target a niche audience. The way that world literature is understood today is a good example of the collapse of many classic boundaries. World literature today is less the transnational reception of nationally created works and authors, as Goethe, roughly speaking, thought it was, than a conscious attempt to "produce," that is, to "invent," more or less from scratch, *global hypes*. Instead of having a national success eventually arrive at the status of an international icon (as in the case of the Latin-American boom in magic realist literature of the 1960s and 1970s), we now have globally marketed figures, works, and authors whose major characteristic is to offer a cocktail of elements, hoping to please as many audiences as possible. These elements can be either borrowed from various cultures (this is the *multi-culti* variant and one may find Salman Rushdie a good example of it – a politically correct rectification of the Norton Anthology syndrome that reduces all literatures of the world to what Anglophone readers are capable of reading and willing to buy), or unhampered by their relationship with any specific culture, except the dominating one whose hegemony is tacitly spread around the world (this is the McDonald's variant, of which one may consider Paulo Coelho the ultimate example – a *muzak* kind of literature that can easily be customized to any and whatever local language).

Yet even the critique of the pseudo-opposition between high-art literature and popular fiction, necessary and liberating as it can be, still misses the point. For the very debate over two types of literature – classic and industrial, elite and popular, challenging and formulaic – continues to focus on the various and shifting

qualifications of literature, instead of focusing on what happens to literature itself once it is taken into the turmoil of a modern culture in which the differences between local and global, national and international, here and there, text and translation, original and adaptation, are rapidly melting away. What should be at stake in a reflection on the encounter of world literature and popular literature is not the frontier between the world and the popular, but the changes in the core notion of literature, whose instability is ceaselessly increasing. What this encounter actually enables us to achieve is not a reshuffling of the cards, but a complete reconceptualization of the game.

In principle, "world" literature is understood as "word" literature, in other words, as a specific subset of language-based artistic achievements. It is true that literature has never been strictly reduced to verbal language (it may suffice here to give the example of theatre, which involves staging). Nor has verbal language been restricted to written language (in the case of poetry, the human voice, musical accompaniments, and performance in general are often as crucial as the written text, if such a text exists!). But, generally speaking, literature is "essentially" a matter of words, not of sounds or images or gestures or whatever. The reasons for this are obvious, but perhaps the time has come to question this tacit assumption. For in contemporary culture the age-old hegemony of the word no longer stands, and its decline is patent in contemporary popular world literature. The position of the word is highly problematic in world literature, to start with, and this is even more so in the case of popular world literature, as I would like to set out in the rest of this chapter.

First of all, it is important to observe that popular literature is not just an object, a set of texts, a list of authors, titles, themes, characters, and motives, but is a *cultural form* (Williams 1974, who actually re-articulates a debate that goes back to the very sources of Western literary culture), a practice, an active network of human and non-human actors (objects, machines, behaviors, rules, institutions, etc.) in which the production of works and values is more important than the concrete output. According to Kalifa (2001), who gives a good overview of the dynamics of mass culture, which is perhaps the dynamics of any form of culture (including that of high art and world literature), the basic constraint at work in popular literature – a field much broader than the mere domain of popular works, for it entails the whole chain of the book industry, from the initial decision to publish a work, even if that work doesn't yet exist and one has yet to find an author to write it, to the most remote after-effects of its reading and dissemination – is the tension between *novelty* and *exploitation*. On the one hand, popular literature can exist thanks only to its novelty. In the very competitive market of popular entertainment, a book that is aimed to be read by the masses is a book that must inevitably bring something new, even if that novelty can be measured only by its contrast with an already existing interpretative frame. Hence, the importance of genres and genre distinctions in popular culture. On the other hand, the novelty effect that manages to make a difference (which of course is not the case for all novelties: one of the most fascinating aspects of popular culture is that it is easy to follow the audience, but that one can never predict with absolute certainty how the audience will change and what its new tastes and preferences will be) has to make a return to investment as soon as possible, so that the extra-literary costs supported by the publisher – a publicity campaign, for

instance, following the logic already exemplarily analyzed by Sainte-Beuve – can be recouped, and reinvested in new products whose chief (and in certain cases, only) objective is to maintain the business's rhythm of production. This exploitation is performed by two mechanisms that stem from the very first days of industrial literature and whose relevance for contemporary popular literature is still paramount: *serialization* and *adaptation*.

The former, serialization, exceeds the single mechanism of installment publication, which of course remains a basic aspect of it, and is more concerned with the fact that a winning formula, i.e. a new product whose novelty effect manages to make a big splash, is repeated a certain number of times – in practice, as long as the market is capable of buying it in sufficient quantities. This is, for instance, to take a contemporary example, the logic behind the "pilot": a certain formula is tried out and, if the reaction is positive, the pilot becomes a series that runs for a whole season and then, if still successful, continues for a longer period – with of course the possibility (for novelty is a very relative notion, which has less to do with cultural memory than with the here and now of a contemporary audience's expectations) of making new releases later on, once a new scarcity effect has been produced. A typical case of this phenomenon is the traditional boost of (new or reissued) translations of world literature authors whose work has come into the public domain. Great authors whose work has more or less fallen into oblivion may be massively rediscovered in, for instance, 2012 (provided they had died in 1942, etc.). The importance of serialization can be measured indirectly by its categorical rejection by all those who try to withdraw their works from the expanded field of mass production in order to compete for the symbolic and cultural capital of niche production in the restricted market aimed at peers rather than at a mass audience (Bourdieu 1984). Here, the ideal is that of the "one shot," for an author jeopardizes his or her prestige by exploiting a character, a style, an idea in more than one book. Novelty and serialization are not compatible in this restricted market, as one can infer from Ezra Pound's famous quote: "Literature is news that stays news" (Pound 1960: ch. 8). The emerging field of the graphic novel provides a wonderful example of this debate, for not all defenders and practitioners of "alternative comics," as Charles Hatfield (2005) would have it, are convinced of the advantages of the deserialized, one-shot principle:

> The hopeful yet at times misleading reception of the graphic novel offers an unusually clear example of what may happen when a popular form, it all its repleteness and variety, is repositioned vis-à-vis literary study. Indeed, as the foregoing discussion suggests, importing comics into prevailing canons of literary value, without regard to their special formal characteristics and the specialized circumstances of their making [Hatfield is referring here to the fact that graphic novels, contrary to comics, are no longer serialized but tend to be elaborated and published as one-shot hardback or paperback volumes, *J.B.*], may mystify their origins and impoverish our appreciation of the medium. After all, every satisfyingly self-contained graphic novel represents a triumph over logistics and circumstance; every serialized graphic novel represents a negotiation between short- and long-term aims.
>
> (Hatfield 2005: 162)

The latter mechanism, adaptation, is as old a phenomenon as serialization. It is actually its twin brother or sister and can be seen as the popular equivalent of what translation is for world literature (in the Goethe paradigm of world literature as intercultural and interlinguistic exchange and debate). In order to increase a work's impact, the popular publishing industry fosters its intermedial adaptation: works that were first released as books are transformed into other media products, so that their success can be further exploited outside the printing business. Already during the time of Honoré de Balzac, which one can roughly identify with that of Sainte-Beuve's industrial literature, all novels were not only serialized as installment novels (and, moreover, illegally copied abroad for the local market – a phenomenon with which we are still very familiar in the DVD sector, for instance), but also adapted as dramas (a very lucrative business, alas more for the theatre directors than for the authors themselves, who were very poorly protected by still very weak copyright legislation [Baetens 2001]). In fact, the adaptation tropism in popular literature simply follows the technological evolution of society as a whole. Every new medium that has appeared since the Industrial Revolution has been brought into service: film, radio, videogames, are self-evident examples; but, as cultural studies research has made clear, the scope of adaptation is actually much broader and entails also phenomena such as fan fiction, the cultural heritage industry, and education.

Adaptation should not be confused with *remediation*, a term coined by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin to describe one of the most salient features of media evolution and dynamics in Western culture. Following Marshall McLuhan's thrilling suggestion that "the content of any medium is always another medium" (McLuhan 1964: 23), the authors first rephrase and then generalize this idea: "we call the representation of one medium in another remediation, and we will argue that remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media" (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 45). The remediation theory developed by Bolter and Grusin may be deprived of the strongly teleological convictions of McLuhan, who believed that media evolution was media progression and that the replacement of older media by newer media was heading in a very specific direction (the "supermedium" he called Light – and which had for him a direct theological meaning, something that survives in some "cyber-mystic" reinterpretations of the internet as accomplishment of a kind of World Soul), yet its temporal dimension is undeniable. Media do not simply compete with each other, as in previously known forms of intermedial dialogue such as ekphrasis and, more generally, the ut pictura poesis aesthetics; they really try to supersede each other in order to offer the (Western) public a kind of media use that comes as close as possible to the (utopian, unreachable, "unrealistic") ideal of immediate transparency.

Contrary to remediation, adaptation does not involve the idea of the supersession of one medium (the older one) by another (the newer one, more efficient in terms of representational power). The adapted as well as the adapting works continue to function together, and even to reinforce one another – including in commercial terms (the release of a film version of a book does not kill off sales of the latter, but instead reinvigorates them). Nor is adaptation to be seen as an illustration of the "medium is the message" principle (McLuhan 1964), which remains the basis of all later remediation theories. In the case of adaptation, content is far from being a

secondary aspect of the whole process, and to a certain extent it is not incorrect to state that adaptation is increasingly *medium insensitive*: the best adaptational content matter is that which can easily be transferred from one medium to another, rather than being glued – as in high art – to one single medium and its material and institutional specificities.

Adapted works, which are the default option in popular literature, are networks, which in turn become part of the larger media culture. In this regard, two characteristics of these networks need to be stressed. First of all, books are no longer at the heart of these multimedia arrangements. The dominant position has now, for many years, shifted from literature to film, at least in economic terms. Technically speaking, the direction of travel is still from book to film (the opposite movement, that of *novelization*, although statistically far from unimportant, still remains marginal in cultural and symbolic terms [Baetens 2005, 2007]) but the power relationship between the two media is no longer what it was: film has the leading role, and more and more books are being written in order to be turned into movies (a tendency already visible in the hard-boiled detective fiction of the 1920s, often written by Hollywood freelance writers). The major turning-point in this regard is undoubtedly the "pictorial turn," a concept imposed by W.J.T. Mitchell during the 1980s (Mitchell 1992) and which coincides more or less with the appearance of the "New Hollywood" blockbuster cinema, launched by Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977), and characterized by a complexly networked merchandizing and tie-in industry. The shift towards intermediality and visuality has changed dramatically the way that popular literature is made, distributed, and read.

It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate the complexity of the literary system and its capacity for resistance to the excessive mediatization of the text. Let us take the above-mentioned example of the graphic novel. At first sight, the worldwide success of this medium (for it would be an error to consider it a mere genre), and more specifically of its American version, branded by a strong input of documentary, on the one hand, and autobiography, on the other (Chute 2008), seems to be a perfect illustration of the visual turn that has swept over the literary field. Yet the widening gap between (popular, non-literary) comics and (alternative, literary) graphic novels is also testimony to the persistence of old-fashioned distinctions between high and low, popular and elite, mass media and elite circuits. Much of the success of the graphic novel is due to the marketing strategy that has managed to withdraw it from the mass market for comics and to upgrade it as a form of contemporary literature, in the very traditional sense of the word.

The example of the graphic novel will help us to present the second mechanism accompanying the gradual transformation of popular literature into multimedia networks: the opening of the very core of the literary system to previously non-literary practices. Literature is continually becoming more of a practice that relies on visual material. Although it is no longer believed that writing will be totally superseded by film (as was being prophesied after World War II, with *auteur* theory in cinema and the notion of "*caméra-stylo*" or camera-pen [Baecque 2003]), the amount of pictures in books has been exploding both quantitatively and qualitatively, first on the periphery (in children's literature, for instance) then at its very heart (the postmodern novel is typically illustrated with photographs). And certain media that used to be

excluded from any serious consideration, such as comics and (today) graphic novels, can now seamlessly find their place within the field of literature, even in their most radical, i.e. wordless and textless, forms (Baetens 2008, Berona 2008). This important change is possible because literature has ceased to be defined in merely verbal terms. It is now the story-telling capacities of a work and its capacity to participate in larger communicative, mediological, institutional, and commercial networks that determines whether or not something appearing between the two covers of a book belongs to literature.

The globalization of world cultures and the subsequent encounter of world literature and popular literature have reinforced the "word and image" debates about writing. In the old system of world literature, the key instrument of such a world system in the making was translation. Through translation, non-original audiences could access the material in foreign languages (within certain rather strict limits, though; and the current complaints about the English monolingualism of postmodern global culture should not be allowed to obscure the fact that in previous eras the range of languages that actively participated in the symphony of world literatures has always been somewhat limited). Through translation – creative translation, that is – writers and readers can assimilate the literary import in original ways and customize it to the tastes and standards of other times and other places – a competitive advantage for many representative texts of world literature, which can be permanently updated in their target languages, whereas in their source versions the natural evolution of all language often proves to be a serious hindrance to their successful transmission.

In the new visual system of world literature, however, it is no longer translation that represents the pivotal version. The reasons for its diminished importance are twofold. Some of them are linguistic. On the one hand, most interested readers, even less-educated readers, now have much better language skills than in the past and their average knowledge of various "major" languages (today one may think of English, Spanish, and French, but one can imagine that tomorrow Chinese will be studied world-wide as well) is often more than sufficient for them to have access to the original. On the other hand, the output of production has increased to such a great extent that it is no longer possible to translate at more or less the same pace as in the past: the novelization industry, for instance, which has for a long time pursued the ideal of providing translations to cater for all the local markets in which a film is released, is nowadays no longer capable of fighting the illegal copy circuit that brings pirate DVD versions to these local markets even before the release of the original movie. An even more striking example of non-translation is fandom fiction, where no one any longer considers the possibility of translating the overwhelming production that takes place outside the traditional publishing circuits. In such a context, translation is condemned to decline to the status of a *supporting* device. Translation in popular world culture seems to be less of an aim in itself than an auxiliary apparatus within a broader marketing strategy. The aim of translation is no longer to translate, but to trigger all manner of side-effects. Once again, such effects are not new (because it is not author driven but market driven, popular culture adopts a very different stance to the ideological basis of copyright), but their proliferation is becoming almost pathological. Take, for instance, the *Da Vinci Code*,

whose translations into almost any imaginable language have created in each local market a fierce competition between glocalized "imitations" for a place on the (expensive) tables and shelves of the popular-fiction bookshops.

Instead of working exclusively with translations, it is also through (mostly visual) adaptations that national works of literature now have the chance to become a part of world literature. No Jane Austen without film and television, for instance – to which one should add also the tourist and heritage industry. (For a critical re-reading of the nostalgic overtones of certain kinds of world literature, see Derek Paget [2000], who sardonically opposes "trainspotters" and "janespotters".) Yet even in the translation era, so to speak, the significance of these visual accompaniments was not to be underestimated. It would be absurd to claim that the success of a book such as *Don Quixote* has depended on the visual translations and adaptations that have been made since the famous engravings by Gustave Doré, but it cannot be denied that these images (which, by the way, have fixed the nonverbal representation of the knight and his squire in the collective imagination) have functioned as a defining feature of the cultural subtext that has kept Cervantes' heritage alive and enabled the survival of a book that few have actually read, let alone creatively assimilated into their own living canon.

In contemporary popular culture, however, it is not sufficient to observe the gradual shift from book to translation, from translation to adaptation, and from adaptation to still other forms of adaptation whose link with the original work is sometimes no longer recognizable. Even if such a presentation is capable of stressing the decreasing hegemony of the "word" and the ever-expanding frontiers of the "world," it is still rooted in a more or less linear system of replication, distribution, and dissemination. It may therefore be useful to complete and nuance this view by taking into account certain features of what Henry Jenkins describes as "convergence culture," that is,

> the relationship between three concepts – media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence. By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who's speaking and what they think they are talking about.
>
> (Jenkins 2006: 2–3)

In a sense, every culture is a convergence culture, and it would be a serious mistake to identify it with postmodern and digital culture. Yet, with its strong emphasis on the importance of content matter (as opposed to differences of medium and the typically modernist idea that each medium generates its own specific content), Jenkins's analysis helps us to better understand the vanishing distinction between original work and derivative work: the opposition of center versus periphery, high versus low, local versus global, word versus image, and so on, tends to vanish. All that remains is the cross-medial network – some would say the "demediatized"

network – and in such a constellation the difference between a world literature library and all types of non-literary and even nonverbal variations on the same content matter tends to fade away.

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# 35
# THE GENRES OF WORLD LITERATURE
## The case of magical realism

*Mariano Siskind*

The making of a new world literature – new world literary critical discourses, new bodies of texts covering a broader and more diverse literary world – calls for a re-evaluation of the old categories that have structured our discipline. One of them, genre, has been conspicuously absent from many of the debates on world literature of the last decade. Since Aristotle, and well into the twentieth century, genre was a master-category and offered itself as the first signifying inscription of any given text. Its absence from contemporary world literary discussions underscores a recent break in the traditional conception of genre as the critical tool capable of realizing the promise of order in a world of textual chaos.

Plato had established in the *Republic* the division between a poetry that describes or narrates actions (epic), and one that impersonates action (drama). But it was Aristotle who inaugurated the tradition of genre theory in his *Poetics*, which organized the proliferation of texts produced and received under the rubric of poetry or poetic mimesis into "kinds" according to the objects and events represented and the mode of such representation. Tragedy and epic, then, were, respectively, dramatic and narrative representations of the world of superior beings, while comedy was the dramatic account of inferior ones. The surviving fragments of Aristotle's *Poetics* set the foundations for a discourse on genre – based on a taxonomic fetishism often belied by actual literary practices – that has permeated the history of literary criticism since the seventeenth century, when literature began to be seen as an autonomous aesthetic discipline, and genre classification became the fundamental maneuver of a discipline that sought to authorize its practices by appealing to a systematic organization of knowledge derived from the natural sciences.

Occasional voices were raised in objection: in his "Dialogue on Poetry" (1800), Friedrich Schlegel had one of his characters utter: "I shudder whenever I open a book where the imagination and its works are classified under rubrics" (Schlegel 1968: 76), and Benedetto Croce expressed similar discontent in his 1902 essay *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (Croce 1978). Despite such demurrals,

the system of genres has been at the center of literary studies ever since, at least until the second half of the twentieth century, when the *imperium* of generic taxonomies began to break down. In 1959, Maurice Blanchot proposed displacing genre as a critical category so as to think about literature in isolation, indeterminate, internally undifferentiated: "The book is the only thing that matters, the book as it is, far from genres, outside of the categorical subdivisions – prose, poetry, novel, document – in which it refuses to lodge, and to which it denies the power of establishing its place and determining its form. A book no longer belongs to a genre; every book stems from literature alone" (Blanchot 2003: 200). A few years later, in 1965, René Wellek pointed in the same direction, perhaps in a more descriptive than programmatic way: "The theory of genres has not been at the center of literary study and reflection in this century. Clearly this is due to the fact that in the practice of almost all writers of our time genre distinctions matter little: boundaries are being constantly transgressed, genres combined or fused, old genres discarded or transformed, new genres created, to such an extent that the very concept has been called in doubt" (Wellek 1970: 225).

Many notables (for instance Derrida in his influential "The Law of Genre") followed suit in declaring the emancipation of literature from the oppression of genre, and the attack on genre as an organizing concept was redoubled among comparatists in the 1970s and 1980s, when scholars increasingly questioned the applicability of Western literary concepts to non-Western cultures, arguing for example that the Japanese *monogatari* has to be seen as something distinct from "the novel," and that "literature" itself is a modern Western concept fundamentally different from the traditional Chinese idea of *wen* (see, e.g., Yu 1998). All in all, the frequent absence of genre from recent reconceptualizations of world literature is hardly surprising. There are exceptions, however. Franco Moretti has invoked genre in his proposal to restore world literature as the disciplinary frame of comparative literature, but Moretti's polemical proposal in "Conjectures on World Literature" (Moretti 2000) (as well as in his monumental *The Novel: History, Geography and Culture* [2006]) does not propose a renewed theory of genre, but deals with the novel in its historical and geo-cultural variability. Moretti's attention to the novel is certainly justified by its global ubiquity and metonymic relation with *the modern*, but the place of the novel within a generic world literary system is not addressed beyond its global hegemony, and the concept of genre itself is not interrogated regarding its viability as a helpful category for the project of world literature. A significant first step in such a direction has been taken by Wai Chee Dimock, who proposes to consider genre "not just as a theory of classification but, perhaps even more crucially, a theory of interconnection," and when it comes to conceptualizing relations between texts, she suggests dropping the rigid legality of genre in favor of the notion of kinship: "a remote spectrum of affinities, interesting when seen in conjunction, but not themselves organically linked" (Dimock 2006: 86). I would like to follow up on Dimock's cue to suggest the need for new world literary genres.

If today world literature can be understood (among other possibilities) as "a mode of circulation and of reading" (Damrosch 2003: 5), genre could still be a compelling travelling vehicle for the realization of world literature as an interpretative project. In this essay I argue, however, that traditional genres are no longer a useful matrix to produce critical discourses on the *trans-nature* (trans-cultural, trans-historical, trans-

generic) of this new world literature and its global imaginaries; that even though, within a world literature paradigm, we still refer to novels, poems, short stories, essays, and drama, the conventional conception of genre is not the productive *meaning-making machine* it once was. The idea of *the genres of world literature* does not present a problem of scale (the same traditional genres considered on a global scale) or quantity (the addition of all the particular, local genres of the world), but it introduces questions of novelty and specificity.

My hypothesis is that world literature produces new genres, or rather new generic formations, constellations of texts whose identity is defined in accordance with new needs and new critical and aesthetic desires translated into new organizing principles: (1) bridging the different historical and geopolitical ways in which texts are inscribed and classified locally and globally within mappings made up of uneven power relations; (2) foregrounding the *worldly* in world literary texts – in other words, discovering the *universalizable* potential of akin texts; (3) accounting for the ways in which texts mutate as they travel across cultures and languages, and therefore elude the generic fixity of yesteryear. And these are only some of the new demands that world literary genres should be able to satisfy. The trick, however, is that since world literary generic formations can no longer be taken to be constructional norms or interpretative guidelines, but the contingent effect of institutional readings (anthologies, syllabi, prizes, conferences), these new genres are as stable or unstable as the world literary interventions that produced them.

World literature has taken full advantage of its potential to open up traditional genres, re-shuffle texts, and produce new generic formations that address specific cosmopolitan, *trans-interpellations* whose inscription in the discursive frame of world literature depends either on their global spread, or on the global aesthetic and critical questions they pose. Just a few examples of new configurations of genres on a global scale:

1. Magical realism as the "literary language of the postcolonial world" (Bhabha 1990: 7) that would extend from García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967) (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1975) to Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) and Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (1996) – I will return to the world literary nature of the genre of magical realism.
2. Cosmogonic epics that work with the mythical narratives that found and sustain cultural worlds, or that use them as materials to reimagine virtual origins and futures, from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Aeneid*, *The Odyssey*, *The Mahabharata*, *Popol Vuh*, the Hebrew Bible, *Beowulf* and their many modern rewritings, from Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and Nabin Chandra Sen's *Raibatak Kurukshetra Prabhas* (1886–96) to Asturias's *Legends of Guatemala* (1930) and *Men of Maize* (1949), or Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars* as a rewriting of the whole genre.
3. Bildungsromans that invite global comparative analyses of the emergence and formation of new and very different forms of subjectivity in a plurality of contexts, for instance, in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1787) and *The Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister* (1795), Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (1830) and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914–15), Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Ken Bugul's

*The Abandoned Baobab* (1982) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Bolaño's *The Savage Detectives* (1998) and Pauls's *The History of Tears* (2007).

4. Travel narratives that thematize displacement, local and global, and cite dislocation both as the condition of its traveling characters and narrative voices, and as an aesthetic ideology articulated in transit between cultures and places of enunciation, redefining the boundaries of the internal and the external, alternatively affirming the foreign, foregrounding its opacity, and erasing markers of difference, from Marco Polo's, Columbus's, or Captain Cook's travelogues to Conrad's Marlow narratives (*Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Chance*, and "Youth," 1898–1913) and the poems and letters that Tagore wrote during his circumnavigations between 1878 and 1925.
5. Ghost narratives, because, as Bioy Casares explains in the introduction to the *Anthology of Fantastic Literature* he put together with Jorge Luis Borges and Silvina Ocampo in 1940, "*the appeared* populate all the literatures of the world: they are in *The Zendavesta*, in *The Bible*, in Homer and in *The Arabian Nights*. Perhaps the first specialists in the genre were the Chinese. The admirable *Dream of the Red Chamber*, erotic and realist novels such as *Kin P'ing Mei* [*The Plum in the Golden Vase*] and *Sui Hu Chuan* [*Water Margin*], and even philosophy books are rich in ghosts and reveries" (Bioy Casares 1940: 7). The omnipresence of ghosts (meant in global, metaphysical, and psychoanalytic senses) make up a world literary genre that might encompass Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1600–1), Marx and Engels's *The Communist Manifesto* (1847), James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1956), Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of the Ghost* (1965), Roth's *The Ghost Writer* (1979), and perhaps even Lacan's seminar XIV, *La logique du fantasme* (1966).
6. *Ghazal* poetry, whose spread throughout Asia and Europe since the twelfth century has produced a textual archive written in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Pashtu, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Hebrew, Spanish, German, and English. The world literary nature of the *ghazal* is not determined only by its spread over a vast geography of literary languages; it also resides in its constitutive attempt to bridge the divide between the human and the divine (the two *worlds* of classical and medieval world literature), using "language itself to transcend the worldly and the sacred, areas that are otherwise mostly dealt with separately. The ghazal goes beyond the boundaries of profane speech, yet simultaneously hauls secret speech back into the human context" (Bauer and Neuwirth 2005: 9–10). Read as a world literary genre, the Muslim and post-Muslim *ghazal* would consider classical compositions and interpretations, by figures from Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi to Muhammad Iqbal, and modern reappropriations, from Ghalib, Goethe, Rückert, and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, to Mahmoud Darwish, Adrienne Rich, and Agha Shahid Ali.

These are only some of the many new generic formations (and just a few texts within each of them) that make up the material fabric of world literature out of singular poems, novels, essays, whose inscriptions in traditional generic frames cannot satisfactorily address critical questions about their global circulation, reproduction, translation, and appropriation, or about the transcultural conversations, quotations,

and antagonistic resistances writers engage in when immersed in their writing processes. I am thinking of world literary genres as taxonomic constellations that are aggregated by contingent scholarly endeavors in reading literatures from around the world (rather than structural patterns to which writers conform, or against which they compose), which can only gesture the normativity they achieve briefly and only in very specific and limited institutional contexts; genres that exist and produce critical meaning in and for world literature alone. In the next section, I will concentrate on one such formation, magical realism, for only within world literary discourses, imaginaries, and desires has it become a distinguishable genre of its own.

## How does a genre go global?

Of the different world literary genres posited (explicitly or implicitly) in syllabi, anthologies and critical readings, magical realism is one of the most established aesthetic forms. But only recently has magical realism been construed as a world literary genre, when it was identified as an aesthetic strategy of postcolonial literary fields. Before, in the 1970s and 1980s, magical realism had been seen as a typically Latin American literary code. Critics like Josefina Ludmer (1972), Enrique Anderson Imbert (1976) and Angel Rama (1982, 1987), among many others, read Carpentier's *lo real maravilloso* and García Márquez's *realismo mágico* as the overcoming of the apparent contradiction between the region's desire for a cultural modernity in synch with Europe and the United States, and the recuperation of its cultural particularity. Since the 1990s, however, several academics have denounced magical realism as a "reification of alterity" (Moreiras 2001: 145–46) consumed by metropolitan audiences that affirm their sense of superiority in their rejoicing in magical realist gimmicks because "it doesn't happen, couldn't happen, *here*" (Molloy 2005: 129); magical realism, then, as a form of critical domestication (Kadir 1993: 26).

These affirmations of – and resistances to – the identification of magical realism with the putative cultural essence of the region concide in their perception of magical realism as a conspicuously Latin American problem. But since the 1990s, from quite different subject positions and with markedly distinct implications, a number of comparative literature scholars have characterized magical realism as the emblematic genre of a postcolonial world literature and, more generally, as a global literary currency (that would then include metropolitan texts like Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, Peter Carey's *Illywhacker* or Marie Darrieussecq's *Truismes*) now emancipated from the Latin American determinations that had launched it into the world scene. Homi Bhabha has called it the "literary language of the postcolonial world" (Bhabha 1990: 7); Gayatri Spivak describes it as a Latin American aesthetic form that "has been used to great effect by some expatriate or diasporic subcontinentals writing in English" (Spivak 1990: 57); Fredric Jameson says that it is an "alternative to the narrative logic of contemporary postmodernism" (Jameson 1990: 129); Parkinson Zamora and Faris, who published the most ambitious critical compendium on the global scope of magical realism, consider it "an international commodity" (Parkinson Zamora and Faris 1995: 2); David Damrosch links magical realism with the expansion of world literary markets from Latin America to India and the Balkans

(Damrosch 2009: 106–7); Franco Moretti inscribes it as a liminal aesthetic of the modern world epic (Moretti 1996: 233), while Michael Denning sees it as part of the global tradition of proletarian, committed, and progressive literature (Denning 2006: 703); Jean-Pierre Durix writes that it is "a new multicultural artistic reality" (Durix 1998: 162); and Christopher Warnes (2009) effectively defines the long history of the genre, tracing critical and aesthetic discourses on it from Novalis and Ernst Jünger to Alejo Carpentier and Ben Okri. Perhaps even more importantly, magical realism is never absent from world literature anthologies, book series, and syllabi; the novels usually included or analyzed (García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*) enter these world literary formations not as singular texts, but as participants and representatives of an organic transcultural genre.

But magical realism's place in the imaginaries and expectations of world literature is often naturalized, and so the world literary status of the genre is usually taken for granted and left unquestioned. We need to interrogate precisely the process through which an aesthetic formation, an as yet unformed text-collective, becomes a world literary genre. How does a certain literary protocol, recognized beyond its singularity as a genre, become universally available as a productive and interpretative device? Only a historical narrative of the actual spread of a given genre throughout the globe, an account of material and concrete encounters, appropriations, translations, re-significations, and transformations, can inform its world literary stature.

The worldly history, geography, and cultural politics of magical realism did not begin (as is usually assumed) in Latin America, but in Paris, the city that since the nineteenth century had served as an intersection between Latin American desires and Western European cultural experiments. In 1925, a German art critic, Franz Roh, was the first to give discursive substance to the concept of magical realism, albeit not to interpret narrative forms but post-expressionist works of art. He coined the term in a book/catalog on and for an exhibition of paintings that Gustav Hartlaub had organized in Mannheim, Germany, under the title *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity, or New Realism), with works by Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Max Beckmann among others. Roh thought of *Magischer Realismus* as a category capable of reconciling the referentiality of impressionism with the expressionist attempt to project the artist's spiritual subjectivity onto the sensible world. Between the mid-1920s and the 1940s, Roh's concept of magical realism traveled through marginal channels of Europe's avant-garde landscape. In 1927, Massimo Bontempelli – director of *"900" Cahiers d'Italie et d'Europe*, a magazine published simultaneously in Rome and Paris – wrote several essays calling for a magical realist aesthetic as the invention of "fresh myths from which the new atmosphere we long to breathe in will emerge" (Bontempelli 1978: 750). Also in 1927, Roh's piece was translated into Spanish by Fernando Valente in Ortega y Gasset's influential *Revista de Occidente*, which circulated widely among Latin American émigrés in Spain and France. And finally, there was a surrealist component: Bontempelli, while in Paris, was part of André Breton's inner circle and his interest in Roh's notion of magical realism supplemented the surrealist's anti-realist, anti-positivistic aesthetic of *le merveilleux* that Breton had articulated in his 1924 surrealist manifesto.

When Miguel Angel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier, and Arturo Uslar Pietri – the writers who would go on to produce the essays and narratives that would define magical realism as a Latin American aesthetic in the late 1940s – arrived in Paris between 1924 and 1928, the French capital was "the Mecca of a new international cult of 'the primitive', and the center of an intense traffic of *l'art negre*" (Camayd-Freixas 1995: 33). They became friends, and were frequent guests at surrealist gatherings at Café La Coupole on the Boulevard de Montparnasse, where Uslar Pietri became close with Bontempelli (Camayd-Freixas 1995: 34). It was in this web of cosmopolitan intellectual exchanges that was Paris in the 1920s and 1930s that the notion of magical realism was collectively discussed and devised, precisely as a world literary idea.

The genre traveled to Latin America in Carpentier's suitcases when he returned to Cuba in 1939. In 1943, he took a trip through Haiti and began taking notes for his 1949 novel, *The Kingdom of this World*. A year before, he had written an essay that he later decided to include as a preface to the novel, "On the Marvelous Real in America," where he laid down the epistemological foundations of the discourse of magical realism. For Roh, Bontempelli, and the surrealists, the emphasis was on the power of the artist as seer to unveil the supernatural determinations of reality, as a metaphysical notion, while Carpentier defined the marvelous real as the socio-historical nature of a Latin American reality (and later, marginal, subaltern reality in general). In his formulation, magical realism results from the experience of the clash of the colonial presence in the region, when European rationalist practices and institutions come up against the radically different epistemologies and historical experiences of local – indeed, native and historically victimized – particular cultures. The marvelous real as a cultural condition prescribes a literary form, magical realism, capable of accounting for subaltern and *subalternized* socio-cultural realities. And this is where the importance of *lo real maravilloso* resides: it produced the conditions of possibility for the postcolonial translations and appropriations of magical realism as a global genre whose main feature is the inscription of modernizing aesthetic agency within cultural-political horizons. In his Nobel Lecture, Miguel Angel Asturias had famously proclaimed that "If you write novels merely to entertain, then burn them!"

Published a few months after *The Kingdom of this World*, and working in the same direction as Carpentier's novel, Asturias's *Men of Maize* reinforced the aesthetic and political potential of magical and ritualistic local myths that signify the constitutive ground of a community defined as an alternative to Western, bourgeois modernity. A few years later, Jacques Stéphen Alexis's "On the Marvelous Realism of the Haitians" (1956) popularized the concept of the marvelous real throughout the Francophone world. After these initial articulations in Latin America, the genre gained global visibility with its *emplotment* (in Hayden White's term) in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), thanks to the bully pulpit that was the so-called boom of Latin American literature, reinforced by the attention drawn to the region by the Cuban Revolution (1959) and the boom writers' explicit support of Fidel Castro.

García Márquez's saga of the Buendía family and of their village, Macondo, has served a double function in world literary formations as *the* representative of magical

realism and of Latin American literature at large. But the rock-solid place of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in world literature very rarely elicits the question of why García Márquez's novel came to be identified as synonymous with magical realism as a whole. Why this novel and not, say, Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*? Can these questions be answered by invoking the higher aesthetic value of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*? I believe the only way to address the universal appeal of Macondo and its identification with the genre as a global aesthetic discourse is by reconstructing the material and concrete history of the globalization of this novel, a process that began with its explosive and unprecedented critical and commercial success.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude*'s publication in 1967, in Buenos Aires, had been carefully strategized by three actors on both sides of the Atlantic: in Barcelona, García Márquez's literary agent, Carmen Balcells, and in Buenos Aires, Paco Porrúa, editor of the publishing house Sudamericana, and Tomás Eloy Martínez, director of the news magazine *Primera plana*, one of the most important "vectors of dissemination" (Sorensen 2007: 109) of a new Latin American cultural industry. The way in which these players combined efforts to promote the novel even before it was released, the investment in advertising, and the implementation of marketing techniques never seen before, resulted in an unparalleled critical and commercial success. The novel's first two printings of 8,000 copies sold out in two weeks. The third and fourth print runs were sold out in the following two months, and the Argentine publishing house could not print the book fast enough to respond to demands from booksellers in Mexico, Colombia, and Spain who were expecting shipments in the tens of thousands. Balcells took advantage of the book's success to alter the balance of power that existed between authors and publishers, and negotiated agreements that liberated the foreign rights of the book so that she could deal with European and North American publishers independently of Sudamericana in Buenos Aires. This resulted in the novel's being translated and published almost immediately after it was first published in Spanish, in Italian in 1968 by Feltrinelli (translation by Enrico Cicogna as *Cent'anni di solitudine*), in French, also in 1968, by Editions du Seuil (translation by Claude and Carmen Durand as *Cent ans de solitude*), in German in 1970 by Kiepenheuer und Witsch Verlag (translation by Curt Meyer-Clason as *Hundert Jahre Einsamkeit*), in English in 1970 by Harper and Row in the USA and Jonathan Cape in the UK (translation by Gregory Rabassa).

No Latin American novel had been translated so rapidly into all the languages upon which international success hinges. So it is not surprising that by the mid-1970s, and even more so after García Márquez won the Nobel Prize in 1982, readers in Europe and the USA were devouring the novel. Thanks to the unparalleled reach of the novel in translation, English-speaking postcolonial intellectuals were the ones who were first and most intensely inspired by magical realism, seeing in the novel a mirror that reflected what they perceived as their own postcolonial reality. In a tribute to the Colombian writer organized by PEN International in New York, Salman Rushdie recalled that in 1975 a friend had asked him whether he had read *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He had never heard of such a novel before and his friend sent him home to read it:

> And of course when I did read it, I had the experience that many people had described of being forever lost in that great novel. Unforgettable. I think all of us can remember the day when we first read Gabriel García Márquez; it was a colossal event. One thing that struck me, which was one of the things that first struck me when I went to Latin America, was the incredible similarity between the world he was describing and the world that I knew from South Asia, from India and Pakistan. It was a world in which religion and superstition dominated people's lives; also a world in which there was a powerful and complicated history of colonialism; also a world in which there were colossal differences between the very poor and the very rich, and not much in between; also a world bedeviled by dictators and corruption. And so to me, what was called "fantastic" seemed completely naturalistic ("Inverted realism").
>
> Rushdie (2003)

If, during the 1970s García Márquez was a *writer's writer*, after his 1982 Nobel Prize he became the greatest celebrity for general readers around the world, and magical realism came to be identified as a third world genre whose efficacy resided in its adaptability to be articulated in the most diverse cultural locations. Without the universal horizon that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* opened up for magical realism, a vast array of novels of marvel could not be read in world literary contexts, as part of a transcultural generic formation, including such disparate works as Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) and *Beloved* (1987), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) and *Shame* (1983), Latife Tekin's *Dear Shameless Death* (1983), Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), Mia Couto's *Sleepwalking Land* (1992), Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (1996). Without the global horizon of magical realism, all of these novels would have been considered in relation to nationally or locally bound ethnic and generic formations: respectively, African Americans in the USA, post-partition India and Pakistan, Anatolian folklore in Turkey, Animist beliefs in postcolonial Nigeria, political unrest in Mozambique or in rural China (see Siskind 2011).

The debt of most of these novels to *One Hundred Years*' articulation of "magical realism as a means of interrogating ideas about history, culture and identity" (Warnes 2009: 96) is self-evident in two complementary, indeed, necessary, aspects: one formal, the other cultural-political. First, these novels follow García Márquez's postulation of a narrative whose objective (or rather, *objectivized*) point of view is identical with a culture that naturalizes the marvelous, interwoven with estranged social domination, massacres, wars, and other historical traumas. Second, they do so in the way they conceive and articulate the marvelous and the fantastic, not so much as a form of reflecting "multiple cultural influences" (Bowers 2004: 58) and modes of belonging, but in relation to specific subaltern (hybrid or not) cultural experiences resulting from colonialism and other forms of local or global oppression.

But magical realism might be a deceiving case study of world literary genres, because it has achieved a kind of stability that most of the new genres I referred to lack, dependent as they are on the production and reproduction of the critical discourse around them. Indeed, the efficacy of magical realism as a genre produces the reification of its aesthetic value, transforming generic form into commodity form,

identifiable in its most formulaic features as in the cases of Isabel Allende's *The House of Spirits* (1982) and Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989).

On the other hand, most other world literary genres, precisely because of their instability, open-ended boundaries, and contingent nature, are in a position to restore some of the critical potency that the category of genre has lost. In order to partake of world literary imaginaries, novelistic, poetic, or dramatic texts cannot be read as mere novels, poems, plays, because when seen through these ready-made generic labels, the resulting world literature too readily becomes abstract, schematic, devoid of cultural and political tensions – world literature as the sum total of the genres that pre-exist its formulation as a specific form of reading and delimiting *the literatures of the world*. Contrarily, the project of a new, cosmopolitan world literary critical imagination requires critical practices capable of illuminating what I have termed the *trans-nature* of aesthetic and cultural phenomena, which makes up the material texture of world literature. We need a new conception of genre as a contingently bound, heterogeneous discursive constellation that provides world literary readers with a ground for comparison, a structure which is not an inherited form (as in the case of traditional genres), but one that has to be articulated and argued every time. Genres as textual assemblages with no unified features, prescribing no norms, and therefore open to all kinds of formal and historical traditions.Genres as floating textual constellations that recreate the field of world literature with every critical intervention.

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# 36
# THE POETICS OF WORLD LITERATURE

*Zhang Longxi*

In a study of tragedy in relation to Aristotle's *Poetics*, F.L. Lucas argues that poetics, i.e., a philosophical treatment of the nature and elements of literary representation, could have emerged only in ancient Greece because, among all the peoples in the ancient world, the Greeks alone had the intellectual curiosity and capability to raise questions. "Other races have fashioned into art and story dreams as lovely; but it is from the Greeks that Europe has learnt, so far as it has learnt, to question as well as to dream, to take nothing on earth, or in heaven, for granted – that unfaith, in a word, which has also removed mountains" (Lucas 1957: 12). Philosophical inquiry into the origin and ultimate elements of things was supposedly a unique Greek predilection, for "the other ancient nations" did not question the world they lived in. "They loved, as most men do still, certainty better than truth" (Lucas 1957: 13). We may not expect Lucas to know anything about Qu Yuan (339?–277? BCE), a poet of ancient China, who began his "Heavenly Questions" with: "Who passed down the story of the far-off, ancient beginning of things? How can we be sure what it was like before the sky above and the earth below had taken shape? Since none could penetrate that murk when darkness and light were yet undivided, how do we know about the chaos of insubstantial forms?" (Qu 1985: 127) Then he followed with nearly 180 questions to inquire consecutively about the why and how of the universe, about ancient myths and human history. It is true that this poem is not well known other than to students of ancient Chinese literature, but the point is that today, when we discuss *poetics* in relation to a truly global concept of *world literature*, we need a much broader frame of reference than Lucas's that begins and ends with Europe. We need to go beyond the Greek and the Aristotelian tradition, even as we fully acknowledge Aristotle's *Poetics* as a classic example of the kind of work we need to do.

The horizon that is opened up is truly immense, if poetics is to address the infinitely vast body of literature in all the world's languages and cultures, but David Damrosch has offered a more manageable, though still daunting, concept that includes "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (Damrosch 2003: 4). Circulation and translation are thus defining factors, and world literature is literature read in the

multicultural world, beyond its original home in a national language and culture. Thus, world literature "is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading" (Damrosch 2003: 5). Likewise we may define the poetics of world literature as a set of fundamental questions about the nature, qualities, values, and components of literature so understood, rather than an infinite, ungraspable conglomeration of all the critical views in the world's different traditions. As world poetics, it must cross over national and regional boundaries. As Earl Miner points out in a pioneer work, "to consider [poetics] of but one cultural tradition is to investigate only a single conceptual cosmos, however intricate, subtle, or rich that may be. To consider the other varieties of poetics is by definition to inquire into the full heterocosmic range, the full argument from design, of literature" (Miner 1990: 7). What matters for poetics is not so much comprehensiveness as relevance and representativeness: the poetics of world literature must be comparative, encompassing more than one national or regional tradition, and should lead us to a better understanding of world literature with depth and appreciation. It is an open concept expandable to accommodate new examples, a poetics that develops as the very notion of world literature does.

From the comparative and global perspective, then, it is worth noting that, despite its central importance in the Western critical tradition, Aristotle's *Poetics*, as Stephen Halliwell reminds us, "never became at all readily available or widely known" in ancient or medieval Europe (Halliwell 1989: 149). For Europe, the *Poetics* of the Stagirite was a "rediscovery" during the Renaissance in the late sixteenth century. When it was lost in Europe, however, the *Poetics* was studied by Arabic scholars, notably Abū al-Walīd Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Rushd (1126–98), known in the West as Averroes. His commentary on the *Poetics* offers an opportunity to open up Aristotle's work to other, rather different traditions. For instance, Aristotle makes this distinction between tragedy and comedy (48a) that "the latter tends to represent people inferior, the former superior, to existing humans" (Aristotle 1995: 35). In his commentary, Averroes renders these two terms as "satire" for discouraging vices and "eulogy" for encouraging virtues. "Since every comparison and narrative representation is concerned only with the noble and the base," says Averroes, "it is clear that in comparison and narrative representation only praise and blame are sought" (Averroes 1986: 66). To substitute "satire and eulogy" for Aristotle's "comedy and tragedy" may seem a moralistic misreading, but that is linked, as Charles Butterworth explains, to Averroes's "understanding that poetry focuses either on praise or on blame," which "derives more from the rank he ascribes to poetry in the hierarchy of knowledge than from his misapprehension of what Aristotle means by tragedy and comedy" (Averroes 1986: 13–14). Averroes may have overemphasized the pedagogic and moral functions of tragic and comic drama, but that only shows that poetry plays quite different roles in different cultures and societies.

By an intriguing coincidence, "praise" and "blame" are exactly the two functions Confucian commentators assigned to poetry in ancient China, particularly in the commentaries on the *Book of Poetry*. To each poem in that ancient anthology, the commentator would attach a "preface" to specify whether that poem is meant to "praise" the moral influence of ancient sage kings or to "blame" the decadence of a morally fallen state under a wicked ruler. With irony and satire as textual

possibilities, "the same poem can offer either praise or blame, depending on how you take it," as Haun Saussy observes, "since the indeterminacy arises from the assumption that the poem may say something quite other than what it means, *if* it is a 'decadent' poem and *if* it blames while appearing to praise" (Saussy 1993: 96). In many cases, particularly of love poems with erotic implications, such a moralistic hermeneutics of "praise" or "blame" imposes rather strained interpretations in total disregard of the literal sense. Such interpretations may remind us of the rabbinic and Christian exegeses of the Song of Songs which can only be called allegorical, and which operate, as I have argued elsewhere, "to displace the controversial textual elements with ideologically acceptable alternatives, and to change the genre of the text from a poem about love to a canonical text about moral virtue or spiritual truth" (Zhang 2005: 110). As an interpretive method, allegorical interpretation first arose in the sixth century BCE with philosophical readings of Homer, and was later adopted by Philo of Alexandria and Christian exegetes to interpret the Bible. By arguing that the Homeric or the scriptural text, or the text of a poem in the Confucian classic, means something different from what it literally says, allegorical interpretation mainly serves to justify the canonicity of texts that may be charged of untruth or immorality. Why allegorize? How does allegorical interpretation come about? What implications does it have for the reading of literature? These are the type of questions we should ask in the poetics of world literature.

One major critical question concerns the origin of poetry. Aristotle sees poetry as arising naturally from the human instinct of mimesis (48b), which "distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earliest understanding" (Aristotle 1995: 37). Poetry as an art of mimesis can be analyzed in logical terms, but an earlier concept of poetic inspiration emphasizes the irrational, even "mad," and certainly unconscious dimensions of poetic creation. Plato claims (*Apology* 22c) that poets cannot explain their own works because "it was not wisdom that enabled them to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets" (Plato 1963: 8). He portrays the poet (*Ion* 534b) as "a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself and reason is no longer in him" (Plato 1963: 220). He also mentions the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona (*Phaedrus* 244a), and admits that "the greatest blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven-sent" (Plato 1963: 491). Obviously, Plato recognizes the mysterious side of artistic creation that cannot be fully explained in logical terms, though as a philosopher, he certainly prefers the logical and the rational to the poetic, the irrationally inspired.

The ideas of inspiration and unconscious creation exist in many cultures, and they exist, for example, in Sanskrit poetics of ancient India, where poetry was thought to come spontaneously, as "the outpouring of the intense *emotion with the ease and spontaneity of water* overflowing a jar" (Rajendran 2001: 11). Inspiration, says Rajendran, was thought to be "a phenomenon of unpredictable occurrence," and critics such as the ninth-century Ānandavardhana held that "when the poet is rapt in contemplation, his imagination is flooded by genuine poetic figures without the least amount of conscious effort" (Rajendran 2001: 10). The inspirational idea locates the origin of poetry in the poet's subjective condition rather than the imitation of an external

action, while the ancient Chinese *Book of Documents* presents yet another alternative that "poetry speaks of one's intent, and song prolongs the spoken words." Emperor Shun had just ordered his minister Kui to teach the royal princes poetry and music, and when Kui struck the stone instruments and poetry was chanted in total harmony, "gods and men were at peace," and "all the hundred animals danced in accordance" (Ruan 1980: 1.131). This almost immediately calls to our mind the Greek myth of Orpheus, whose powerful song, as Pierre Somville puts it, "capable of charming all the realms of the living, from craggy rocks to the wildest beasts, suffices to ensure the cohesiveness of the cosmos and universal harmony" (Somville 2003: 303). The Orphic myth reveals a pre-Socratic notion of art before the separation of language from music and dance. "Myth, language and art," says Ernst Cassirer, "begin as a concrete, undivided unity, which is only gradually resolved into a triad of independent modes of spiritual creativity" (Cassirer 1953: 98). This is verified by both the Chinese and the Greek myths, and, in discussions of world poetics, we may rethink such basic questions as the relationship between speech and music, the oral origin of earliest poetry, the connection of early drama with religious rituals and with music and dance in theatrical performance.

These connections are made very clear in the "Great Preface" to the *Book of Poetry* (2nd century BCE):

> The poem is that to which what is intently on the mind (*chih*) goes. In the mind (*hsin*) it is "being intent" (*chih*); coming out in language (*yen*), it is a poem. The affections (*ch'ing*) are stirred within and take on form (*hsing*) in words (*yen*). If words alone are inadequate, we speak them out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, we sing them. If singing them is inadequate, unconsciously our hands dance them and our feet tap them.
>
> (Owen 1992: 40–41)

In such an understanding, poetry does not arise from imitation of an external action, but issues forth as the expression of one's inner thoughts and emotions, as articulation rather than imitation. The term "intent" (*chih*) can be understood in different ways, as James J.Y. Liu notes, "those critics who understood it as 'heart's wish' or 'emotional purport' developing expressive theories and those who understood it as 'mind's intent' or 'moral purpose' often combining the expressive concept with the pragmatic" (Liu 1975: 70). In another important work of Chinese criticism, Liu Xie (465?–522) proposes yet another origin of literature when he claims that *wen* or literature was "born together with heaven and earth" (Liu 1983: 13). Some have interpreted this as presenting a natural or cosmological origin of literature, but this should be better understood as the critic's strategy to bestow on literature the borrowed authority of nature or the entire universe. To the question of the origin of poetry, then, we have several answers from different perspectives, each revealing a different dimension of poetry as a creative art.

Art as the inspired creation of poetic genius is quite common in different literary traditions. In Sanskrit poetics, genius is the result of good dharma accumulated in previous life cycles. As the seventh-century critic Dandin puts it, "*Kaviprathibhā*, the poetic genius is a miraculous faculty inherited from the previous birth" (Rajendran

2001: 10). Genius is indeed a natural and inborn talent, without which artistic creation is impossible. Even the neo-classicist Boileau warns the would-be poet at the beginning of *L'Art poétique* that if he does not feel heaven's mysterious influence and was not born under the star of a poet's genius, he will never be good at writing poetry: "*S'il ne sent point du Ciel l'influence secrète, / Si son astre en naissant ne l'a formé poète, / Dans son génie étroit il est toujours captif; / Pour lui Phébus est sourd, et Pégase est rétif*" (Boileau 1963: 47). The Platonic idea of inspiration became crucial for the concept of genius in nineteenth-century romantic literature as well as in post-Kantian aesthetics. Kant himself considers poetry as the highest of arts, which "owes its origin almost entirely to genius and is least open to guidance by precept or examples" (Kant 1987: §53, 196). For Kant, however, what is essential in aesthetic judgment is taste, not genius, and in case the two are in conflict and one must be sacrificed, "then it should rather be on the side of genius" (Kant 1987: §50, 188). In post-Kantian aesthetics, as H.G. Gadamer explains, "the Kantian ideas of taste and genius completely traded places. Genius had to become the more comprehensive concept and, contrariwise, the phenomenon of taste had to be devalued" (Gadamer 1989: 56). From Friedrich von Schelling to Sigmund Freud, the individual came to be the focus of contemplation, and art and the unconscious became increasingly linked to each other in aesthetics and psychoanalysis, in which poetry or art in general was understood either as the unconscious creation of genius or as the sublimation of an unfulfilled wish or a repressed desire.

In literary creation, however, any emphasis on the unconscious must be balanced by conscious effort, and this is acknowledged almost without exception in all critical traditions. The nineteenth-century romantic idea of the unconscious creation of genius led to the rise of hermeneutics as an art of interpretation to bring the unconscious creation to the level of conscious understanding, hence Friedrich Schleiermacher's famous definition of the hermeneutic task as "to understand the text at first as well as and then even better than its author" (Schleiermacher 1977: 112). The creative, inspirational, and mysterious dimension needs to be supplemented by the critical, logical, and interpretive dimension. Poetic genius must be supplemented by learning and hard work. Thus we may understand why Yan Yu (1192?–1245?), an influential critic in China of the Song dynasty, would make the following statement that would otherwise sound preposterous: "Poetry needs a different kind of talent and has nothing to do with books; it has a different kind of interest and has nothing to do with reasoning. Yet one cannot become an accomplished poet without reading many books and doing lots of reasoning" (Yan 1983: 26).

The natural gift of a poetic genius, often symbolized by the mythological Pegasus, always needs grooming, i.e., diligent study and learning, in order to bring out its full potential to real power. In *An Essay on Criticism*, Alexander Pope tells the young poet: "First follow Nature, and your judgment frame / By her just standard, which is still the same" (ll. 68–69, Pope 1972: 69); but later he gives quite different advice through the example of Virgil: "But when t'examine every part he came, / Nature and Homer were, he found, the same" (ll. 134–35); so he concludes: "Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem; / To copy nature is to copy them" (ll. 139–40, Pope 1972: 71). Here again, the advice is to imitate nature with one's inborn talent,

but also to learn from the exemplary works of one's predecessors. Genius and tradition, natural giftedness and hard work, spontaneity and careful planning, all these are necessary for an accomplished poet and a successful work of literature.

Genius is an individual talent, and it needs to be balanced by the richness of a literary tradition. When T.S. Eliot declares in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists" (Eliot 1975: 38), the romantic concept of the individual is obviously devalued in modernist poetics. Insofar as literature has its own path to follow in development, literary forms, exemplary works, and generic conventions become extremely important. "Poetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels," as Northrop Frye puts it. "Literature shapes itself, and is not shaped externally: the *forms* of literature can no more exist outside literature than the forms of sonata and fugue and rondo can exist outside music" (Frye 1957: 97). The emphasis further shifted from individual talent to language and literary conventions as a system in modern literary theory. As Jonathan Culler argues, "conventions are the constituents of the institution of literature," in which a poem is not autonomous and self-complete, but "an utterance that has meaning only with respect to a system of conventions which the reader has assimilated" (Culler 1975: 116). Literature is here seen as almost an impersonal institution, but it is of course also the collected body of works by individual authors. How to balance the genius and tradition, the unique quality of individual talent and the exemplariness of the classics, all these are again important questions in world poetics.

As critical analysis of literature, poetics necessarily concerns itself with the literary language and the components of the literary work. In *Poetics*, Aristotle analyzes six elements (50a) of the tragic drama – "plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and lyric poetry" (Aristotle 1995: 49). Much of traditional Indian literature, as Barbara Miller says, "is characterized by a preoccupation with the nature of language." The very name of Sanskrit means "put together, codified, classified" (Miller 1994: 5). Sheldon Pollock also notes that Sanskrit is an elevated language "'put together' by means of phonological and morphological transformations" (Pollock 2003: 62). Sanskrit poetics makes an important contribution in the notion of *vakrokti* or oblique, indirect language as essential to poetry. "Indian thinking on poetry, which is largely centered around language," says R.S. Pathak, "regards poetry primarily as a linguistic organization, and, according to it, the language of poetry is *vakrokti* par excellence" (Pathak 1998: 99).

Just as Aristotle's *Poetics* makes a great contribution to the study of tragic drama, the earliest treatise in Sanskrit poetics, Bharatamuni's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (ca. 2nd century BCE), also offers a comprehensive discussion of the art of drama in terms of taste (*rasa*), emotion (*bhāva*), language, and bodily gestures that give expression to various emotions. Sanskrit drama is highly stylized, as Bharatamuni describes eight kinds of taste or emotions symbolically represented in eight colors and related to eight deities: "love is purple, buffoonery white, mercy gray, violence red, bravery orange, fear black, disgust blue, and surprise yellow" (Huang 1999: 41). In Sanskrit drama, as in traditional Chinese theatre and some other traditions, it is common to use painted masks to symbolize emotions or characters by various colors. Compared with Greek

tragedies, Sanskrit plays and, for that matter, traditional Chinese plays, often close with happy endings to satisfy the moral sense of poetic justice. Thus, whether there is tragedy in Indian or Chinese drama becomes an often-asked question. This can be explored first by looking at Aristotle's opinion about the ending of tragedies. At one point (53a), Aristotle seems to prefer tragedies that "end in adversity" (Aristotle 1995: 73), but in another place (54a), he considers the dramatic action "best" in which "when the person is on the point of unwittingly committing something irremediable, but recognises it before doing so" (Aristotle 1995: 77). Aristotle does not seem to have a decisive opinion as to whether tragedy should end in sorrow or pain, even though it usually does, and Greek tragedies, unlike later, for example, Shakespearean tragedies, do not necessarily end in death or even disaster (e. g., Sophocles' *Oedipus* or Aeschylus' *Orestes*).

Related to this – and important to any consideration of justice – is Aristotle's idea (53a) that a tragic hero is someone "who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but through some kind of error" (Aristotle 1995: 71). Aristotle's original for "error" is *hamartia*, which many nineteenth-century critics understood as a tragic flaw or moral weakness, and thus the tragedy became a sort of just punishment. Georg Gottfried Gervinus, for example, tried to ferret out the moral weaknesses of Shakespearean tragic heroes and found them somehow deserving their fate because, says Gervinus, "if poetry does not exhibit the rule of moral justice, it degrades itself to a lower position than that of genuine history" (Gervinus 1863: 1.28). Such moralism is rejected by most modern critics, who consider *hamartia*, as Frye remarks, "not necessarily wrongdoing, much less moral weakness: it may be simply a matter of being a strong character in an exposed position" (Frye 1957: 38). Frye brings up a striking image: "Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass" (Frye 1957: 207).

The image certainly alludes to the ancient fable about the oak tree struck down in the thunderstorm, but the bending reed survived unbroken. That image also appears in classical Chinese literature. Cao Zhi (192–232) wrote in a poem: "Tall trees wail in the strong wind, / The sea casts off the rising waves" (Yu 1956: 27). Li Kang, a writer of the same Three Kingdoms period, wrote in his *Treatise on Fate* that "the tree taller than the woods, the wind will break it off; the mound jutting out from the bank, the current will rush against it; and the man nobler than the average, the multitude will traduce him." Qian Zhongshu compares these words with many other texts, including La Fontaine's version of the fable, in which the reed says: "I bend and do not break (*Je plie et ne romps pas*)," and he remarks that the same idea is expressed by a Chinese proverb that "big trees call forth big wind" (Qian 1986: 3.1082). If the quintessential tragic sense is the sense of a high and exposed position, where a noble hero has no choice but to bear the brunt in a clash of forces, then, such a sense can be said to permeate many plays and poems in the East, even though the general tone of the plays, and particularly the endings, are different from a typical tragedy in the Greek or European tradition.

Such comparative issues are best explored in the poetics of world literature, for the global perspective will allow us to arrive at more adequate understanding than is

possible within the limits of a national or regional literary tradition. Since George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), for example, the cognitive approach to the study of metaphor, language, and literature has developed into a new field of "cognitive poetics," which, as Peter Stockwell defines it, is all about "the study of literary reading" (Stockwell 2002: 165). If such new approaches can develop beyond the Western boundary and be tested in the wider sphere of world literature, much is to be gained. World literature as a concept and as a body of literary works is still growing, and so is world poetics, which promises to provide us with critical perspectives more expansive than ever before and therefore the prospect of greater knowledge and deeper insights in literary theory and literary criticism.

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# THE ETHICS OF WORLD LITERATURE

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On the face of it, the paradigm of an ethics of world literature is merely an extension of the deep and varied explication of ethics and literature. A conventional approach would say that if we live and act in an appropriately responsible manner the good life can be ours, and that literature can be a notable and influential guide, greater than moral philosophy itself, although, since Kant, ethics has stood apart (because it is much more than doing the right thing). Like others, I am intrigued by the "turn to ethics" in literary critique, and not just because, as Michael Eskin (2004) emphasizes, the mesh of ethics and literature, however vexed, is foundational in Western philosophy. There was a time when an ethics of literature appeared derailed by more vital concerns, a professional adherence to the text as self-sufficient, for instance, or to the deadening opacity of "high theory" where responsibility was rarely measured in relation to the reader. Appearances can be deceiving, however. For instance, philosophy after World War II had not expunged ethics but found it much more problematic. The mass murder pursued in the war, including a nadir for humanity in the Holocaust, emptied ethics of its appeal to conduct or reflective praxis. Words seemed cheated of their meaning, just as millions of innocent lives were denied their full capacity. Value was more safely pursued as exchange, and projects of reconstruction, like the Marshall plan, proffered the ultimate goodness of capital accumulation. Ethics did not disappear, but it would take time to render ethics as a palpable engagement with the horrors unleashed by the twentieth century.

It was not just the war, however, that demanded a new language of ethics; imperialism, war's closest relative, had also conspired to contradict the otherwise eloquent and appreciable statements on ethics within the core of Western humanism. The more imperialism thought colonial acquisition appropriate to the advance of Western ideals, the more a deficit opened up in what constituted ethical behavior. With a simple question, "Civilization and colonization?", Aimé Césaire made ethics humble if not humbug, while Gandhi's quip, "I think it [Western civilization] would be a very good idea," underlined that the recipients of beneficent moralizing saw a different agenda. If ethics is not simply ideological, it nevertheless struggles under the weight of its own watchword, "ought" (as in, it ought to be more than what it is).

A third element within this recent history of ethics stems from Nietzsche, who had no time for the "ought" in normative ethics, just as he disparaged any religious thought that would place the after-life before life as it is lived. While there is no space here to detail all that Nietzsche finds wanting in morality and ethics, his influential critique is based on articulating something other than nihilism in overcoming them. Judith Butler has recently compared Nietzsche's turn against ethics to Emmanuel Levinas's move in the opposite direction. Nietzsche seems to stifle the Other (the Other of an "I" as a human subject) by privileging the noble and nobility (a position that few of us live within); Levinas lets the Other breathe (as a living counterpart to the "I"), but only by asserting its ethical demand as asphyxiating in its own way. Butler will collapse the opposition between the two, but to rescue neither Nietzsche nor Levinas in the name of ethics. Indeed, her resistance to ethics is more in the spirit of resistance itself (essentially as what subjects "do"), especially when it comes to the political, a substantive clause in any ethics.

As Butler's nuanced reading attempts to argue, the turn to ethics is not just a reaction to the abstractions of high theory but is also a historical manifestation of theory's attention to its claims about truth. Within analytic philosophy this was perhaps more a variation on a theme in, for instance, valuable distinctions between reasoning and ethical reasoning, but continental philosophy has increasingly prised responsibility from sovereign subjectivity (the "I") as a discourse on philosophical methodology in its own right. Agamben's work on "bare life" comes to mind here, which must critique what it means to reconfigure "ethics after Auschwitz," (Levinas also develops this theme).

A turn to ethics then, whether in literary critique or philosophy, is not overdue, so much as it is a rethinking that has taken place within important philosophical and historical debates. Is an ethics of world literature an epiphenomenon of such currents? Does it have its own genealogy and can this escape an inevitable connection to the forces of commodification that we associate with globalization? In that regard, is ethics subject to niche marketing, as in ethical shopping, so that world literature is read as a healthy lifestyle choice, a space where "ethics after idealism" might appear reversible as a paradoxically material manifestation?

Any creative response to such questions, however dubious the initial assumptions, requires a further gloss on the limits that the ethics of world literature accentuate in the very name. Indeed, the possibility of an ethics of world literature is primarily short-circuited by what concept of world is operative in that formulation. For the literary purist, "literature" is the deciding factor because this, undoubtedly, comes with value judgments, moral aperçus, and the considerable clout of cultural discernment. "Knowing the difference" between right and wrong, good and bad, etc. appears to stand above and beyond what passes for a discourse on "world" as a concept – the "difference in knowing" itself. The distinction between the concept of world and world literature is hardly innocent, as the former approaches ethics from a philosophical suasion while the latter argues from something closer to an existential guarantee: if world literature "is", then its ethics are assured by that very being – it cannot claim to be in the "world" without them. The term "world literature" merely invites descriptions of what the ethics are, not analysis of the philosophical knot in the concept of world in play. In this, at least, it reminds one of F.R Leavis's

favorite questions for his students after elaborating his interpretation of the "Great Tradition": "Is this not so?" It is a living principle of judgment, a moral certitude that what counts as literature must press a discussion of ethics on any modifier connected to it. There is nothing necessarily unreasonable in this reason to be; nor should one simply exclude the evidence of literature in the passionate defense of ethical substance. Indeed, such a turn to ethics, as we have described it, has been a prominent feature of literary critique for some time, particularly since the waning of formalism and the pseudo-scientificity of late modernism. Clearly, value has conceptual gravitas in both world and literature, but it would be incautious to assume that it is articulated in the same way, as world literature is apt to demonstrate. Ethics does not settle the pitfalls in world literature (economics and politics provide much more insight into its historical emergence). Instead, one might consider ethics as offering perspective on the speculative nature of world literature, as something of a future ontology (what being will be), the kind of literary exploration that makes ethics less a *system* of value than a cultural space more socially agonistic.

In the spirit, but not necessarily the philosophy, of Spinoza, I would press for a world literature to come that does not elide its ethical roots, the ur-ethics of Goethe, strongly influenced by the monist scandals of the Portuguese-Dutch thinker of a century earlier. For most readers of Spinoza's *Ethics*, the least appealing aspect itself is not the oneness of God and nature but that it is demonstrated in "geometrical order," as if Euclidean precision in Latin could avoid the vagaries of categorizing emotion or affect. Scandalously, for some, Spinoza considers what constitutes ethics by reasoning through a very tightly ordered process of proposition and demonstration not usually associated with the inconstancy of feeling. But, just as Moretti problematized what world literature means by graphing it as much as interpreting it, so an ethics of world literature can be proposed as a problem of methodology rather than as a system of proofs and demonstrations largely self-evident by restatement. This does not necessarily reduce abstraction, but it tends to resist the notion that world literature is merely the result of a properly globalized moral philosophy. The geometric accentuates a creative tension between a desire for a methodology of ethics and our often unsystematic emotions. One of the reasons Goethe liked Spinoza's approach was because it placed more emphasis on the form of the ethical question rather than standardizing the contents of the answer (to be found in the evidence of the literature itself). The resurgence of world literature cannot be a simple replay of Goethe's conceptualization with its attendant ethical responsibility, but a profound reconfiguration determined, to a degree, by a crisis in how we understand "world" itself. The pattern of crisis may be similar but the specificity of crisis requires not only a methodology in difference but what we might call an indifferent methodology, one that does not presume that a celebration of difference in world literature (which is unimpeachable on its own terms) exhausts the ethical responsibility which the crisis in "world" involves today.

The first axiom for an ethics of world literature pivots on the crisis in "world" as concept. To the extent that world literature is symptomatic of this crisis, its role as an ethical resource is, to say the least, ambivalent. Defining the world does not limit it (just as making it plural does not necessarily extend it). All the axiom states is that world literature discovers its ethics in a crisis of "world" that it may enact rather

than overcome. This does not obviate the laudable desire among world literature advocates to advance global understanding through literature; rather, it emphasizes that all world literature should be, whatever else it is, an attempt to think the world conceptually, and the necessity for such thinking is underlined by the conceptual crisis that is the primary instance in its effulgence. For Goethe, "world" was essentially the extension of a national agenda whereby a national literature could define and enrich its character by acknowledging literary production on a global scale (Goethe saw this as de-emphasizing national literature but it did not fray the nation idea, as even a cursory reading of German history after Goethe would affirm). This maintains a powerful presence in contemporary articulations of world literature, just as putatively global organizations, like the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, frame interactions on the basis of sovereign right.

On the whole, institutional discourses of this kind are founded on forms of national narcissism. "World" becomes an alibi: with "world" we count as a nation (a rather literal interpretation of Moretti's mathematical account of the novel). The crisis of "world" is in part the persistence of national prerogatives that participate in the world only to the extent they are separable from it. The acknowledgement of the world as an embrace of otherness, globally, maintains a kind of national externalization of local alterity, and it is assumed that "world" can bear the weight of such displacement. Jean-Luc Nancy, by contrast, takes the concept of world as that which creates itself, not as a teleological goal that permits national narcissism to persist. This means suspending globalization as what we know for a sense of the world that is radically subjunctive rather than subjective. For Nancy, mondialization, or world forming, is a process of invention from nothing (*ex nihilo*) and suspends in advance the notion that sharing the world refers to an expanded circulation of content (in our context, the content of literature). According to this approach, "world" no longer designates a greater whole (for each nation in its globality), but marks instead a relation to itself, on its own terms. The advantage for the "world" in world literature is that it animates the tension between literature as a representation of the world and world literature as its own world (the latter is a hallmark of Pascale Casanova's world systems theory of world literature). On the one hand, we remain free to acknowledge literature's capacity to form worlds; on the other, how such literature circulates may not necessarily enrich world forming as a relation to itself as the creation of a better world, let us say. As a bonus, mondialization preserves a certain untranslatability, which remains a deep concern of a comparatist understanding of world literature. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses to Nancy's concept that do little to remedy the problem of ethics that is our chief concern. First of all, mondialization cannot be an alternative to globalization if by the latter we mean a specific logic of capital accumulation and circulation. The philosophical tenacity that Nancy uses to characterize globalization (particularly at the level of technology) does not begin to fathom the complexities of a world relation as economic, and when he comments on Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach ("philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it") he seems to underline rather than allay the suspicion that interpretation rather than praxis is at stake. When Marx examines the revolutionary logic of capital, it is not from nothing (*ex nihilo*) that he proceeds. The world that it creates is transformable precisely because it is capital that creates it.

The concept of "world" in world forming, however, has only philosophical ardor to nourish it, so when Nancy asks "And if sovereignty was the revolt of the people?" there is not enough of the "world" we know to imagine the contours of its possibility. Surely, the response might go, this is to externalize once more and betray the "world" as concept? One can respect the concept of "world" as a relation to itself but still doubt its prescience as an integer of political economy. It remains a lever, a conceptual response to the avatars of globalization who read it as an infinitely efficient means of technological determinism. But the move from that to global justice, which is where Nancy's *Creation of the World or Globalization* ends, is fraught with more conceptual baggage than even the defamiliarization of "world" can carry. And this is also its lesson for an ethics of world literature which must content itself with the specificity of "world" in its relation as literature, and not with a presumed correspondence to all that is global interaction.

But many critics have already reduced world literature to a much more modest proposal than "world" implies, so why add further clouds to its conceptual horizon? If there is a certain impasse or impossibility built into "world" as currently construed by Nancy, for instance, there is some value in distinguishing the various levels of crisis that obtain; indeed, it may be the ability to discern such valences that constitutes the ethics of world literature as such. The test case for this is not the problems that Nancy appropriately brings to bear on the concept of "world," but the ease with which "world" has become "worldliness" in cosmopolitan canons. Worldliness is too often presented as an openness to difference in the world rather than the emphasis one sees in Edward Said's work, for instance, on thinking through a critical position about how such difference is produced. Again, this is not to say that world literature is bad for encouraging enlightened worldliness. Far from it. World literature should be taken seriously, and particularly in its latest manifestation, precisely because it dares to broach questions of cultural difference on a world scale. As I have stressed, however, that concern often reveals rather than relieves methodological limits.

The ethics of cosmopolitanism has been vigorously debated, and more intensively so since the advent of globalization. The more cosmopolitanism was associated with cultural capital and modes of elitist tabulation, the less it seemed to correspond to an ethical foundation in global understanding. In the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, the cosmopolitan credentials of postcolonialism were challenged as evidence of a newly mobile intellectual faction naively read as true representatives of cultural value from the global South. The critique was not unfounded, but spurred a more sanguine critical reflection on basic principles derived in part from rethinking Fanon, Said, and Gramsci. Today, the problem of world literature as representing a compromised cosmopolitanism under the economic aegis of globalization comes down to a second axiom for an ethics of world literature about the constitution of value. If the concept of "world" displaces or decenters the enlightened procedures of world literature as an epistemological project, then value is the troubled space of its desire, the desire to embrace the world.

The disjunctive appeal between world literature and globalization appears to exist in the binary of cultural and economic value. As Casanova, among others, has shown, the literary system that organizes world literature as a subject is only

relatively autonomous from the surplus value vital to capital accumulation in the current world system. The aesthetic predilections of the former would seem to undermine the crass economism of the latter but, just as the initial fortunes of English literature as a discipline were intimately tied to the macro-social realities of imperialism, so contemporary manifestations of world literature are distilled within the actually existing conditions of globalization discernible in the wake of the Cold War. While both Goethe and Marx envisaged world literature in terms of global circulation and transaction, the problem of value has been transmogrified, as if the brute force of commodification on a world scale has collapsed the certitudes of value either side of the cultural/economic divide. Again, the question is not whether the values espoused by particular works of literature constitute a properly global ethics, but whether the world according to globalization is the deciding factor over the terms in which value, including literary value, can be currently posed.

The worldliness of capital accumulation is a false universal because the general equivalence it promotes pivots on extraction, primarily from the value of labor power. When Spinoza places value in autonomy it is not in the service of goods as the good life or accumulation by dispossession. True, the joy and passion elaborated in the *Ethics* can make for a stark contrast with his personal asceticism. Goethe, again influenced by Spinoza (see Bell 1984, for instance), attempts to square happiness with resignation in his work. Yet, if Goethe's world literature rests on the idiosyncrasy of Spinozist ethics, its value system has been banalized by commodity lore. The cultivation of personality, which for Goethe is epitomized by *Bildung* and Herder's ideal of *Humanität*, clearly has synergies with capital-based modernity, yet this has often marked its ethical outlook as an idealist last resort rather than as a constant and critical "ought" arrayed against the depersonalizing elements of capitalism. Value, in this constellation, teeters on a void paradoxically marked by accumulation (of capital), as distinct from the increase in value possible from the literary

For Slavoj Žižek, the valence of void for value comes not just from Marx's reading of value's abstraction, but from the necessity of the void in the structure of desire. In his *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Žižek argues that if the genuflections of value in Marx are complex, especially between use value, exchange value, and relative surplus value, the void always hovers at the edge of value as the desiring machine of capital. World literature as an idea articulates a desire for world that is, as I have suggested, trumped by the world in its abstraction. But if "world" cannot be found, how can value be founded on this basis? To the extent that world literature suggests that it does more than literature itself, value is posed as a condition of lack. More than simply naming, it signals simultaneously a subject that has yet to be (world literature to come) with retrospective identification (this is what world literature has been). The value of world literature is that which is desired, rather than derived, from the gap between these two senses of the subject. One is always free to relativize from such distinction, but only at the cost of misconstruing the logic of value at stake, which is its ethic against what is otherwise the rational calculation of the market. Thus, if world literature embodies an ethics, that body is a void structured by a desire for value that "world" cannot possibly fulfill. At this level, the ethics of world literature is not "after idealism" but demonstrably within its purview.

The idealism of world literature, according to the above connection between value and void, is not false consciousness, but provides questions about the troubled materialization of "world" which it should putatively correspond to and/or interrogate. Taken together, the gap between world literature and world, with the difference between world literature to come and what has been world literature, provides a space of profound agon. In this, the ethics of world literature must necessarily differ from those of neo-liberal globalization (the market is good for you), but also from the laudable heterogeneity seen within theories of global civil society (see Keane). The latter have emerged from the recognition that the perquisites of nation-state polity are insufficient to the claims of non-governmental transnationalism, but this view risks eliding or under-valuing (in the widest sense of the term) the contributions of autonomous nationhood to the powerful reorientation of the nations of the South in particular. At this level, the question of ethics is not about the moral suasion of primarily Western liberal democracies, but about whether "world" itself is a measure of the exploded discourses produced by decolonization and delinking from any ethical substance that had valorized and normalized subjugation on a world scale. How does world literature negotiate this fraught space of agon?

Several possibilities and limits present themselves. If, for instance, we believe world literature as an idea is tied to modernity, then its ethical ground would seem to founder as modernity closes. If, on the other hand, world literature is read as a field of creative disputation about the contours of cultural value as a contingent transnational discourse, then the terms of modernity are not simply there for confirmation or derision. There can be no ethics of world literature premised on standardization or the weak inclusionism of the rights of the Other. This does not mean that we head towards the horrors of the state of exception explored by Carl Schmitt (2010), or even that we are always simply within the terms of such exception, but that the ethical meaning of a world literature finds its common good in singular dissent.

As a logical problem, an ethics that proceeds from the singular, however, would seem to contradict the inclusionism which the largesse of "world" promises. The aim is to resist the notion that "world" and ethics are a distillation of globalized human rights. Instead, the humble contribution of literature to "world" subsists not only in questioning the substance of "world" in that constellation, but also in writing out the contradictions of its truth claims (Jacques Rancière [2010], for instance, reads this ethics against those between human and citizen; here the pivot is between literature and "world"). The dissent persists in its singularity not because a particular work of art broaches or not the unrepresentability of "world," but because it resists the idea that worldliness is primarily an integer of appropriate moral content, a faith in the simply generalizable. In world literature, ethics finds itself arrayed against its own universality, one that cleaves not to moral relativism, but to the task of doubting any world that lives on in the assumption that its practice, for the individual, for the collective, makes us at home in difference.

Ethics, then, will not be a pedagogical blueprint that produces world literature in its own image. Conversely, world literature does not secrete an ethics merely by anthologizing copious amounts of great literature from as many places as possible. The impasse of "world" does not block the possibility of ethical responsibility in the

practice of properly globalized literary studies. Instead, attending to the process of contravention itself is more important than producing a moral guide premised on the otherwise implicit gesture of worldly accumulation (gathering the world, as it were, through literature). At this moment in history the concept of "world" does not allow us to posit it as an ethical resource, and if it becomes such a resource in its own right literature will no longer need it as a modifier. If this seems a long way from Goethe's Spinoza-inspired natural morality, it nevertheless maintains something of its belief in pleasure as also the enjoyment of critical questioning. What adjudicates the ethics of such struggle is the world that is its base, which, as I have tried to suggest, can only make the terrain of world literature deeply contestable even in the most restricted terms. And that is precisely why, irrespective of Kant's categorical imperative, one "ought" to attend to it.

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# THE POLITICS OF WORLD LITERATURE

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In one of the earliest explicit treatments of world literature in terms of politics, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels envisage the rise of a world literature out of many local literatures, as a consequence of an increasing "impossibility" of "national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness" in the age of cosmopolitization of needs, instruments, and modes of production, and the global distribution of intellectual products (Marx and Engels 1994: 162). What is remarkable in this early assessment is not only the economical-political analysis that underpins it and makes world literature into a particularly adequate embodiment of the relationship between the basis and the superstructure, but the designation of world literature as a social practice and a (fortunate or unfortunate) political *project*. In highlighting, in ambivalent terms, the nature of world literature as a project, Marx and Engels echo J.W. von Goethe's 1827 thoughts on world literature, a conceptualization which, by contrast, presupposed a vigorous existence of nations and national literatures. With some variation, most theorizations and their practical applications, from Goethe to Homi Bhabha and from Qing China to socialist Yugoslavia, assume the component of a social project as central to the definition and status of "world literature." At their best, such assessments and practices reveal world literature as an *unfinished* project. Indeed the recognition of the unfinishedness of its object of study, and thence the unfinalizability of its own methods and conclusions, is vital for the (politics of) the study of world literature. For this reason, I open the present essay with an espousal of thinking about the relationship between world literature and politics in terms of unfinished projects and practices – abiding in those uncertain terrains to which Ernst Bloch, another proponent of world literature, dedicated his life's work (Bloch 1986).

Methodologically speaking, it is prescient to think of world literature as a project, for world literature is not only a larger or smaller agglomeration of literary works, but also a metaphor as well as a means of expression; a concept, a discourse, a moldable pedagogical tool, and an "imaginary community"; a knowledge, a practice, a stance, and an affect. Thus conceived, the study of world literature also usefully reminds us of the etymological link between "project" and "projection": like all projects and project-practices, world literature is also a site where desire is mobilized

and set into circulation, and where our "projections" about others are negotiated (see Bhabha 1992: 146). All these modalities of existence of world literature alternate or coexist in a given locale, or a given community of scholars, and it is these different lives of world literature that decide its status and operation in the global and regional networks of cultural exchange – for example, whether world-literature-as-project poses as a corrective to or an instrument of the dominant regional or global political paradigm.

As such, the phenomenon of "world literature" simultaneously takes on multiple guises, appears on multiple scales, implies crossings of variegated categories, implicates semantic and affective networks both internal and external to itself, and is reflected upon through what, to a traditional methodology, may appear as an unconquerable number of perspectives. Such projects force the researcher constantly to reflect on the grounding terms which she uses, to revise them, or reinterpret them, as the scales, categories, and the very nature of the object of inquiry change. Studying such projects requires a methodology that can accommodate this unstable relationship between the object of inquiry and the researcher (as an embodiment of the practice of scholarship) through constant empirical and heuristic "crossings of scales, categories, and viewpoints" (Werner and Zimmermann 2006: 30).

The practice of politics and the phenomenon of the political intersect with these various manifestations of world-literature-as-project at various levels. Here I should like to survey some of these interdependent crossings and the issues that each of them foregrounds. The first of these crossings occurs at the site of defining world literature as an agglomeration of literary works. In terms of mode and its own politics, this perspective is "conclusive." It conceives of its object of study as a sum of data, with variable but stable characteristics; and thence it delineates its own scope of operation through an assessment of as much of this variety as possible (often with a pronounced awareness that this kind of knowledge can be achieved only in a democratic network of scholars rather than through individual research) and the production of conclusive, or at least widely applicable, advice. This perspective bifurcates into two intertwined approaches. The qualitative one bases its insights on understanding world literature as a sum total of canonical works. It poses rather direct, if enduringly disconcerting, political questions about the ethics of choice and the nature of the canon as a product of not only an inevitably limited scope of advice, but also a kind of hierarchical thinking that the reader may or may not espouse; it foregrounds the issues of representation of global literatures and the hegemony of written literature. Taken strictly, this approach yields fervent discussions, but rarely progresses beyond a chivalric battle for the inclusion of particular works in a greater canon of world literature – discussing Bhāsa's *Urubhanga* ("The Broken Thigh") alongside Sophocles' *Antigone* and referencing Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* ("So Long a Letter") and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in the same breath.

The quantitative approach furthers an understanding of world literature as a global accumulation of literary texts, both written texts and what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o inclusively called "orature," more or less irrespectively of their canonical position; it often contests not only the idea of the canon but also the division between "low" and "high" culture in any given setting. A subsection of this perspective engages a

more manageable framework and sees the phenomenon of world literature as encompassing "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (Damrosch 2003: 4). Thus conceived, the quantitative approach is strategically tied with a few socio-political questions pertinent to all cultural politics; these range from the ethics of translation to the politics of reading, and a more general issue of the great unread (Moretti 2000b). In practice, the quantitative approach sometimes slips into pessimism about mastering such a vast body of works and reverts back to a form of canonical thinking.

Both approaches within this perspective attract critique, as famously exemplified in René Wellek's complaint that, understood in these terms, world literature is simultaneously exaggeratedly cumulative and inexcusably narrow (hyper-canonical) (Wellek 1970); much the same could be said of the ambivalent political underpinnings of both approaches, I add. Indicatively, this divided function has been often evoked to question Goethe's reflections on world literature and the concept of world literature itself. However, this type of criticism entirely neglects the capacity of world literature and its study to be a project and/or an ongoing practice rather than a complete object of inquiry, and thus falls prey to a similarly narrow conceptualization of what world literature may have meant historically (for Goethe or Marx and Engels, in particular) and what it means nowadays. The problem, as I indicated above, is one of critical habituation: of scholars' reluctance to envision a methodology that would account for the variability and incompleteness of the object of study and the object's uncanny conflations with the practice of critical inquiry itself.

In a more pro-active mode, however, the struggles over defining what constitutes world literature as an assembly of texts interestingly surround the aspirations and efforts of the new study of comparative literature. The latter are fueled by a particular variant of enlightened utopianism: hope that all scholars and readers will make a concerted effort to read as much as possible in as many languages as possible (Spivak 2005). Insofar as this approach frequently insists on not only the sheer quantity but also the tentative nature and unfinishedness of the corpus of world literature, the challenges that the study of world literature faces under this guiding principle signal the impossibility of conceiving of world literature as anything final or finalizable. To account for this impossibility, a more multi-leveled approach has been developed, guided by the legacy of comparative studies in the social sciences and humanities. The comparative approach conceives of world literature as the entirety of actors and routes engaged in the transnational circulation of texts, as well as the relationships, including political ones, established between various cultures and cultural products involved in this process (note here the overlaps between the comparative and the quantitative approach, exemplified, for instance, in Damrosch's definition glossed above). Here world literature emerges not only, or even primarily, as a collection of texts, but as a world literary system of similarities and variations, or what Yuri Lotman would call a dynamic semisphere, where the merit of literary texts lies precisely in their capacity to challenge the canon and in the activities that ensue from that challenge (Lotman 1977, 2000; Kliger 2010: 258, 264–65).

Both the premises and the implications of this perspective are overtly political: its terms are borrowed from political sociology (Max Weber, Immanuel Wallerstein)

and historiography (Fernand Braudel), and are specifically indebted to Marx and Engels's correlation of economic development and the rise of world literature. On this reflection, the discipline emerges as "a study of the struggle for symbolic-hegemony across the world" (Moretti 2000a: 64). Observing that literary interferences "occur most often at the periphery of the system" (Iglesias Santos 1994: 339), scholars underscore the unilateral quality of the process: a target literature engages in the import of forms and patterns from a source literature without the latter being so much as aware of the interference, let alone cognizant of the indigenous products of the target literature (Even-Zohar 1990: 54). The struggle of writers from the periphery for their work to be recognized as "world literature" is then subject to those fluctuations of literary capital that present themselves as intrinsic to the field of literature (the market value of literary functions and styles) but that in actuality only replicate, in the realm of letters, real political inequalities (Casanova 2004: 73).

While this kind of scholarship insists on a significant amount of convergence between "material" and "intellectual" hegemony (Moretti 2003: 77) and a political program of denunciation of observable inequalities (Casanova 2004: 262), there is also an understanding that geopolitics does not directly map onto the literary domain. Fundamental to this critique are thus larger issues of the hegemony of language: the historical domination of, for example, Sanskrit, Latin, or German, and, especially, the contemporary supremacy of English and its manifestations in the world of reading and writing (the recent boom of Indian English writing and the remarkable success of Chinese novelist Ha Jin's fiction in English are good examples here). The last critique targets, specifically, the ethics of translation – the sometimes intractable homology between the symbolically endowed (politically-culturally dominant, or strategically important) and the translatable.

Interestingly, it is from the same intellectual position that the most poignant criticism of world literature emerges. It has often been remarked that world literature – as a discipline, or a conceptual species – has followed trends in economic and political history: world literature regularly gains prominence when a need for consolidation of a global system is pronounced (see Kadir on empire and world literature in this volume), and its conceptualizations as a rule originate precisely in what Casanova calls "great national literary spaces." Scholars like Chris Andre have complained that world literature tends to function as ideological justification, or even legitimation, of whatever power-position it speaks from – be it the supremacy of German culture in a rapidly interconnecting Europe, or the US hegemony at the time of the Latin American Boom, or, more recently, the seemingly post-hegemonic system of multinational capitalism (Andre 1996: 75). In the past two decades world literature scholars – who, admittedly, most frequently come from or are situated in the epicentres of cultural activity – have learned that the only way to confront this type of objection is to be self-reflexive, and consistently to open for discussion new areas, intellectual and geopolitical. It is attentiveness to this need that led me to the following insight: when linked to specific regions and conjugated with the various *modi vivendi* I enumerated earlier, the perspectives on world literature and politics surveyed here appear both insightful and narrow. To highlight some conundrums posed by our current thinking about world literature and politics, I shall relate an episode from

the early history of the concept and relate it to the foreign and domestic politics of a particular region.

One reason why Goethe propounded the idea of "world literature" in the first place was that he loved South Slavic oral poetry so much that he wanted it to be recognized worldwide. Certainly Goethe also had many other foreign literary interests, but his efforts to promote South Slavic epic poetry are especially noteworthy. Particularly captivated by the South Slavic epic song "Hasanaginica" ("The Mourning Song of the Noble Wife of Asan Aga"), Goethe retranslated the song into German in 1774 or 1775, based on Alberto Fortis's 1772 Slavic transcription and Italian rendition, and published it in Herder's *Volkslieder* in 1778. Sir Walter Scott translated the song from German into English in 1779; Goethe himself included an improved translation in a collection of his own poetry and under his own name in 1789; and a range of European writers undertook to translate or adapt the poem in the years that followed (Mérimée, 1827; Pushkin, 1835; Mickiewicz, 1841).

Such was the circulation and adaptation success of "Hasanaginica" that by the time the first indigenous scholar, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, transcribed the poem in its original language and published it in *Mala prostonarodna slaveno-serbska pjesnarica* (A Small Book of Slavic-Serbian Folk Songs of the Common People, 1814; German trans., 1815), he could not but send a copy to Goethe adorned with an exalted dedication (Wilson 1970: 92–113). Karadžić visited Goethe in 1823 and 1824 and the latter went on to take a lifelong interest in South Slavic oral poetry, translating and reflecting on it, in particular, in 1825–27, at the time that he entertained the concept of "world literature" in his conversations with Eckermann (Goethe 1986–95: 13.1: 408–18 and 865–69). In turn, Goethe's cogitations on world literature became a symbolic voucher strategically used to promote the South Slavs' cultures and their struggles for the political independence. Henceforth "world literature" would be evoked in the region, together with the concept of comparative literature with which it soon became affiliated, to draw attention not so much to foreign canonical texts as to the contribution of South Slavic cultures to the global cultural landscape.

Similarly to the debates following the publication of Moretti's 2000 article in *New Left Review*, the case of "Hasanaginica" suggests that it can be simultaneously extraordinarily illuminating and limited to think about world literature as "one and the unequal" (Arac 2002; Kristal 2002; Moretti 2003; Beecroft 2008). A major problem with this line of reflection on politics and world literature is its tendency to sideline flexible temporal thinking in favor of a rigid synchrony whose axial points are the development of nation-states and international capitalism. What Goethe perceived as the exclusive national spirit of the epic poems he admired had no social equivalent on the ground, a circumstance reflected in the bafflement of scholars, including Goethe himself, as to which particular "nation" or ethnicity should be credited with "Hasanaginica" – a poem about the Muslim Serbs living in Bosnia, originally recorded in the "ikavica" dialect of Dalmatian Croatia (Wolff 2003: 189–92).

More important still, it is arguable that "*pre-national* ethno-symbolic heritage" continued to shape not only local literary production but also the dynamics of appropriation of foreign literatures in the region (Smith 2002: 79). A related problem, then, comes into view: due to a sort of heuristic necessity, the synchrony upon which global poly-system thinking relies collapses into a petrified diachrony

where the cultural "centre" is positioned as "earlier" and the periphery/dominion culture – as "late" or "belated" (Arac 2002: 38; on the Balkans, see Jusdanis 1991; Mazower 2000: 14–17). It is a framework that its proponents themselves see as limited when extended to the discussion of world literary practices in terms of multiple, stratified, layered, and palimpsestically linked temporalities.

This political-methodological conundrum could be resolved, Homi Bhabha has argued, by attending to the interstices of contact zones, the "transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, and political refugees" (Bhabha 1992: 146) – a type of identity that, parenthetically, may describe Karadžić. While Bhabha's proposal does not offer, and does not aim to offer, instruments for interrogation of literary interferences between cultures that have not been in direct contact – for example, discussing Japanese *waka* and South Slavic epic poetry – it nevertheless fruitfully perturbs our categories of inquiry. Still, the call for reckoning with temporal and spatial multiplicities has been answered more convincingly by the studies in the politics of genre. The productiveness of these studies usually depends on how widely the scholar can cast his or her conceptual and thematic net; whether, for example, it is possible for the researcher to think out historical-political temporalities as differently paced, or co-present, and yet to retain the focus on a particular genre as both a "form of history" and a site-specific "historical form."

Discernable as "a politics of representation, with change and innovation implicated in crises as to who and what is represented and how and to whom" (Heath 2004: 170), the study of genres is understood here in the context of the historically conditioned appropriations and misappropriations of generic forms. Goethe's rendition of "Hasanaginica" is a case in point. Supplanting the classical South Slavic decasyllable with a trochaic pentameter, Goethe effectively transformed an epic-heroic song into a lyric poem palatable to the Romantics, in turn inaugurating a vogue of trochaic pentameter as a "mourning meter" in both German and Russian poetry. Revealingly, the status of "Hasanaginica" also changed in the culture which engendered it, a culture that hitherto had not differentiated between epic and lyric modes of poetry. In 1816 Karadžić himself classified the poem as a "lyric" ballad.

Such blatant cases of conceptual colonialism (about which Heath writes insightfully) may, however, obscure positive aspects of international literary interferences. An even more significant heuristic problem that the world-system perspective faces is that it tends to conflate the categories of foreign and domestic politics, subsuming the latter under the former, and inadvertently falling prey to the very conceptual violence it aims to denounce. Even when restituting voice to the "victims" of global literary inequities, this approach tends to preclude a discussion of the specific meanings that world literature may have in a given "peripheral" setting and in the context of its relationship with other similarly or differently positioned geo-cultural spaces. What is then obscured is not only local perspective but also the ways in which world literature can operate as a powerful political agent – national and transnational – even when the conditions of inequality are apparent.

To illustrate this dynamic, I return to the case-study of what now we call, with the inexorability of the future perfect, "the former Yugoslavia." In the first recorded academic lecture on "world literature" and "comparative literature" in the region (at the Belgrade Lyceum in 1852), the politician Matija Ban advocated a multi-directional

study of various Francophone and Slavic literatures. He did so because, he argued, engagement with world literatures could help the South Slavic cultures to establish a unified cultural position. In this surprising manifestation of the twin impulses of the nineteenth-century discussions of world literature – towards unification and towards cosmopolitanism (Guillén 1993: 29) – world literature is utilized to articulate and corroborate the emergent sense of pan-Slavic commonality, and the specific solidarity of South Slavic cultures.

But to "think" world literature means to "do" world literature: to translate texts of world literature, create world literature courses, produce world literature textbooks, lobby for fellowships in world literature, and, broadly speaking, generate favorable conditions for the appreciation of world literature. Due to its heightened visibility, educational politics is frequently the arena where the political battles of world literature are fought, and Ban's talk led to the inclusion of the subject called "history of world literature" in the curriculum of the Belgrade Lyceum, and, in 1873, the foundation of the Programme in General History of Literature (later, Department of World Literature and Literary Theory). As a politically charged project and a hub for the intellectually like-minded, world literature also contributed to the establishment and operation of the Illyrian movement – a cultural-political movement that paved the way for the formation of a shared state of South Slavs, or Yugoslavia (est. 1918). Consequently, the phrase "world literature" became associated in the new country not only with a concept, or educational practice, of studying other cultures, but also with a distinctive view of the world and the new nation's position within it: in academic discussion, translation, and even artistic practice, "world literature" provided the modus by which to challenge the propositions of unidirectional cultural transmission, and affirm the self-perception of the emergent nation as a global, or at least European, conduit of cultural trends (Hergešić, Ocvirk, the Belgrade surrealists; see Bahun-Radunović 2006: 38–39).

Observed closely, then, the relationship between the concept/project/practice of world literature and a community's external and internal politics fruitfully complicates arguments about world literary inequalities. In the setting under discussion, world literature continued to play an important cultural-political role, first in the transformation of the political system from a monarchy into a socialist republic after World War II, then in the 1948 split between the USSR and Yugoslavia, and, finally, in the foundation of the Non-Aligned Movement (1961). *En route* the political meaning of world literature kept changing. In the 1950s Yugoslavian infatuation with world literature – channeled through emphatic translation activity and the Departments of World Literature (Belgrade), Comparative Literature (Zagreb), and Comparative Literature and Literary Theory (Ljubljana) – became synonymous with the young state's precarious balancing between the two blocs. With the rise of the Non-Aligned Movement in the early 1960s, this stance became a deliberate international cultural politics for not only Yugoslavia but also a number of other countries which rejected affiliation with either of the super-powers. In a speedy succession, and together with the influx of students from the non-aligned countries, the literatures of Asia, Africa, and Latin America vigorously entered the Yugoslav circuit of translation and publication. In this way an alternative "interliterary community" (Ďurišin 1984; see Domínguez in this volume) was established, a versatile network that was governed as

much by political assonance as by its members' sensitiveness to the inequalities of the global cultural poly-system.

But one may glimpse other reasons behind the discursive, book-market, and pedagogical prominence of world literature in Yugoslavia. If reading "world literature" allowed one to engage with the imaginary community of one's "non-aligned friends," a sort of comparative camaraderie, the concept also reflected positively on the country's interior structuring. Yugoslavia was a multi-ethnic and poly-linguistic country, whose literature was written and published in at least five languages (the three dominant languages, Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, and the languages of two prominent minority groups, Albanian and Hungarian). As a cultural space that relied, for its cohesiveness and its very existence, on the activity of translation and inter-ethnic circulation, Yugoslavia *had* to endorse the concept of "world literature" over that of national literature. The notion of world literature helped Yugoslavia to imagine itself as a heterogeneous yet unified society, and an interliterary community which could profitably offer its variegated cultural products on the global market. One identifies here an interesting property of world literature: through its capacity to order experience (and experience of the world), world literature may create objective meanings and aid the construction of symbolic canopies under which communities develop their systems of signification.

It merits a note, however, that, whereas world literature can be institutionalized and given normative force, it can also operate – in a similar fashion – on the fringes of the institutional spectrum. Such was the case of the interest in world literature among the Yugoslav nonconformist intelligentsia of the 1970s, or of the battles between the Belgrade Department of World Literature and the Milošević regime in the 1990s, clashes which included peremptory dismissals and suspensions, student street protests, the appointment (and later overthrowing) of a governmentally chosen Dean of Philology, and a forced temporary dismantling of the department (UNHCR/Human Right Watch 1999). In such political constellations the project aspect of "world literature" is accentuated. The very phrase becomes an index of dissent, a plea for non-interventionist circulation of ideas; in a word, a contestatory arena and a counter-discourse.

This account does not exhaust the political modes of world literature, and a brief post-Yugoslav postscript can signal some further possibilities. In the current internet presentation of the Belgrade Department of World Literature one learns that the institution is allegedly "unique worldwide" in its aspiration to treat world literature in historical-intellectual perspective, "untainted" by media studies. Here "world literature" operates variably as a justification of a perhaps obsolete pedagogical practice, a displaced affect (one that voices both inclusivism and insularism), and a support for a particular experience that we call "world literature." In contrast, across the border, world literature is alive in popular culture: not long ago, the Croatian national television broadcast a sketch about the study of world literature in an "evening school." The sketch moves from the qualitative to the exaggeratedly quantitative notion of world literature, where the latter functions as a grotesquely inclusive concept hinging on our ability to memorize and reproduce a wide variety of texts, canonical and non-canonical, domestic and foreign. The chronotope of studying "world literature" in an "evening school" connects this popular media text to the

cultural space of former Yugoslavia. Paired with world literature, Yugoslavia here functions as a virtual space, an imagined (now transnational!) community against which, or in nostalgic reference to which, the Croatian television shapes its politics of representation. Confirming the region-specific functions of world literature, these two examples also highlight the need for further investigation of the concept's psycho-social operation.

Because the polyvocality of social–intellectual concepts such as "world literature" is accentuated in communities of limited extent, Yugoslavia has served as an apt reference-point here, but one may safely assume that many further insights in the politics of world literature could be gained from a perusal of different destinies of this concept/practice/project in other settings (see Part IV, The Geographical Dimension, in this volume). World literature takes on diverse existences within each environment, and its operation in the material world is defined by these multiple functional modalities – its status as a concept, a discourse, a didactic tool, but also an attitude, memory, and affect. These modes of existence are subject not only to the work of a linear political history but also to the layering of temporalities and the political inscriptions of such junctures in each setting or situation of exchange. To consider world literature and politics, then, one needs not only to gauge the temporal and spatial variability of the global cultural poly-system (as advocated by Even-Zohar and others), and the inequities implied in the exchange within this system (as insisted by Casanova and others), but also to account for the multiple constitutive modes of world literature and many "altitudes" on which this phenomenon "takes place": public and private spheres, licit and illicit realms, sanctioned and unsanctioned activities, and always shifting modes of practice. This is indeed a worthy project; one that benefits, I reiterate, precisely from the hope of its own unfinalizability.

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# 39
# USES OF WORLD LITERATURE

*Bruce Robbins*

> The application of the law of large numbers and long periods to politics or history signifies nothing less than the willful obliteration of their very subject matter.
>
> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

If the use of literature is to expose ourselves to the experience and sensibility of others, especially others who are distant from us in time or space or social situation, then adding the adjective "world" to literature seems to be uncontroversial. From this angle the concept of world literature has a very obvious usefulness. It embodies the moral imperative to expand and democratize the set of others whose experiences and situations we are exposed to, and thus also the sorts of self-scrutiny and self-discovery that such exposure enables. It's a small step, but it at least puts us on the path toward the end-point of global democracy: an international public sphere in which all of the world's voices will be able to participate equally.

There are of course less benign views of the category's rise. Anyone who tends to see formal democracy as a habitual disguise for economic strong-arming, for example, will be tempted to wonder whether this jockeying of categories might mask a revaluation of currency, a modification in the terms of trade between national literatures that may offer further competitive advantages to the strong (the metropolis) over the weak (the periphery). That will not be my argument here. My mild ambivalence, which will perhaps prove unfounded as the tectonic plates beneath our fields continue to shift, has to do with a change in time scale and the purposes it can encourage the study of world literature to serve.

Let us assume that the category of world literature has been taking over, or trying to take over, from the ailing non-identical category of postcolonial literature. If this takeover is indeed happening, there are certainly plausible reasons for it. Of the two categories, world literature is certainly the more comprehensive geographically. Many national literatures, like that of Japan, had little if any contact with European colonialism, open though they were to other external influences. Others, like those of Latin America, would have to be severely manhandled in order to fit a post-colonial model arguably centered on Africa and the Indian subcontinent and on

their twentieth-century moments of national liberation. The advantages of the category of world literature are even more emphatic if you consider the subject from a temporal viewpoint. Even in those countries that until the twentieth century were European colonies or (like China) semi-colonies, there is a great deal of pre-colonial literature – in some cases, a proud and enormous canon – that for obvious reasons makes absolutely no reference to the dynamics of colonization and decolonization. This literature simply cannot be accessed by means of the category of the postcolonial. I leave aside the political problems of the category of the postcolonial itself.

There is thus a sort of democratic inevitability about the shift in attention from postcolonial to world literature. Yet there is also something a bit worrying about this shift. Organized as it is around the world-historical event of colonialism, the category of the postcolonial is inescapably political. World literature, I would say, is not. Such political claims as it can make are based, like formal democracy, on the total number of voices, past and present, to which it gives the potential for self-expression. The inequalities of the world being what they are, this is a fatally abstract criterion which, like formal democracy, does not directly register the possibilities of remedying salient injustice or changing the world in the ways it is most perceived to need changing. (Of course from this vantage point the category of postcolonial literature also looks less than ideal.) In any case, it seems worth asking whether the overshadowing of postcolonial by world literature involves what might be crudely called depoliticization.

This question is also raised by the most obvious effect of the new term, which I just mentioned: the inclusion of canons of non-European literature, like those of India or China, that predate colonialism and may have nothing much to do at all with unequal power between the world's nations or regions. This inclusion is, of course, a good in itself. But it seems part of a larger phenomenon that bears looking into: an expansion of temporal scale that is the necessary corollary or accompaniment of world literature's agreed-on expansion of spatial scale. Cosmopolitanism in space brings with it a cosmopolitanism in time (see Domínguez on cosmopolitanism in this volume). This temporal cosmopolitanism looks like it will be one of the primary "uses" of world literature, whether intended or unintended, and thus like a phenomenon of which students and teachers need to take notice.

The phenomenon I am referring to is visible, for example, in Wai Chee Dimock's book *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006), which begins by juxtaposing the American army's destruction of the Baghdad archives in 2003 under George W. Bush with the destruction of the Baghdad archives by the Mongols in 1258 under a grandson of Genghis Khan. Of the many things that might be said about the US invasion, it seems to me that Dimock does not pick the most devastating indictment. What she accuses the Americans of is a presentist assumption that time is linear and irreversible. "For an Iraqi," Dimock writes, "the distance between 1258 and 2003 is nothing like the distance between those dates for an American" (Dimock 2006: 2). Speaking with a certain confidence of what "an Iraqi" (and for that matter "an American") would think, Dimock assures us that, from an Iraqi perspective, the US invasion would be "yet another installment" of the same saga that includes, though it probably didn't begin with, the Mongol invasion. The essential sameness of the Mongol and American invasions, effectively negating the gap of 745 years, is what Dimock embraces under the heading "deep time."

In this and other forms, deep time seems to me one of the most striking but under-analyzed aspects of the rise of the concept of world literature. It has not been widely recognized that, since the critique of Orientalism and Eurocentrism by Edward Said and others, the materials taken to be relevant and necessary for students of literature have undergone not merely an expansion in *geographical* scale, but also an expansion in *temporal* scale. Thanks in part to Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which centers on the period from Napoleon to Kissinger but also makes large gestures back to Dante and Aeschylus, we are now looking not just farther out, but farther back – farther back into the history of the West as well as into other histories. This temporal de-provincializing seems more of a good thing than not. Still, it seems necessary to ask some questions about the particular forms it might take, the political drawbacks and dilemmas it might entail.

"[T]here are categories of experience, such as beauty or death," Dimock writes, "that seem not entirely predicated on the temporal and spatial boundaries of the nation-state. This is also the case with long-lasting genres, such as epic and novel, with thousands of years behind them, and demanding analytic frames of comparable magnitude" (Dimock 2006: 5). It seems likely that world literature is going to breed more discussions of what we used to call "themes" like beauty and death, which come to seem permissible, though they are dangerously close to the atemporal universals that they were understood to be a century ago, simply because they are too large to fit the nation-state. Even students of the novel, who are usually suspicious of such universals, are now becoming accustomed to a temporal frame which has been enlarged so dramatically that a certain kind of secular history no longer seems to apply. One notable instance of this enlargement appears in Margaret Doody's *The True Story of the Novel* (1996). Doody expresses her dissatisfaction with "the history of the novel on which I had been bred in the 1950s and 1960s," like Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), by going, as she says, "very far back indeed" (Doody 1996: xvii). She gives the novel "a continuous history of about two thousand years" (1). This temporal scale not only revises Ian Watt, but decisively breaks Watt's identification between the novel and secular modernity. As it turns out, Doody reads the novel in terms of religious ritual. She justifies this Christian-mythic-feminist reading in part on the grounds that, following in the footsteps of Herodotus the "barbarian-lover" (480), it does higher justice to Europe's Others. It is as if she were saying: Watt speaks for the secularism of Northern Europe, but I speak for the rest of the world, and the rest of the world is filled with believers. Religious belief has a larger global constituency. The real worldliness is therefore *other*worldliness.

A re-legitimation of religion is surely not the intention hidden behind all efforts to enlarge the temporal frame of literary scholarship. But this is a possible and perhaps even a probable effect of re-weighting the materials of world literature so that the center is farther back in time, before even the possibility of secularism had emerged. At any rate, those who encourage a return to religion or who take an entirely critical, rejectionist stance toward modernity (often the same people) will now have an easier time arranging syllabi so as to make their case. To the extent that the secular can be associated with the historical, and the sacred with the eternal, it seems clear that Dimock, like Doody, is moving us away from the first set of terms and toward the second. History as explanation has dropped out. Dimock makes no effort to

understand either the American invasion of Iraq or the Mongol invasion of Iraq; it's as if the obvious, unquestionable barbarism of the first invasion somehow removed all pressure to explain the barbarism of its American reincarnation. (For a distinct and fascinating take on the same two invasions of Baghdad, see Kadir 2011.) All of this is inexplicable, she seems to say, a manifestation of an eternal propensity to cruelty, an eternal human nature. In getting rid of "linear history," you also get rid of the imperative of historical analysis.

Dimock suggests that Americans overestimate the 745 years that have passed between 1258 and 2003. They should learn from the Iraqis that 745 years of linear time don't really matter. They should learn to remember the Mongols of Genghis Khan the way she says the Iraqis do – vividly, as if the sack of Baghdad had happened yesterday. Thanks in part to the vogue for history-as-trauma, this sentiment already gets too much respect in the humanities, and the move toward world literature is likely to aid and abet it. In an essay about the legacy of British colonialism in Ireland, Luke Gibbons draws parallels with the meaning of the Middle Passage to African Americans and the meaning of the Holocaust to Jews. He then poses a rhetorical question: "Would anyone seriously suggest that the traumatic lessons of the Holocaust shouldn't be as pertinent in a hundred years time as they are today?" He clearly does not expect an affirmative answer. But is such an answer absolutely inconceivable? Suppose you did not stop with 100 years. Faced with the absoluteness of "traumatic lessons," why should any number of centuries make a difference? Consider how "Ottoman colonialism" was remembered in the 1990s by Serbs justifying "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo. Consider the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, from which Serb Christians date their forced submission to the Muslims. If 100 years should have no effect, what about 600 years? Why shouldn't the slaughter of 1389 on the Plain of Blackbirds be remembered as if it had happened yesterday? That's what Dimock is recommending when she says Americans give too much weight to those 745 years. If ancestral memories and ancestral hatreds are so fresh and alive for the Iraqis, or the Serbs, or the heavily armed Jewish settlers in what they still call Judea and Samaria, shouldn't they be equally fresh and alive for us? Shouldn't we be teaching our children to keep them as fresh and alive and murderous as possible?

I won't pretend that I see this happening. There is, of course, a part of our professional common sense that strongly resists it. Even in the humanities, whose rationale often seems to be forcing society to remember things that society would prefer to forget, there seem to exist unarticulated guidelines that silently balance the imperative to remember against an implicit but equally peremptory imperative to forget, or at least to downplay. Assia Djebar, in her book on the French conquest of Algeria (*Fantasia*, 1985), chooses to forget – and also to remind us that she *is* forgetting – the prior conquest of Algeria by the Ottomans in 1510. Did she have an obligation to remember it? What about the massacres that accompanied the seventh-century Arab conquest of the Berbers, or Amazigh – "the free and noble people," as the Berbers called themselves – which get the briefest of allusions in the prefatory "Chronology"? We are clearly not committed to the proposition that, faced with historical atrocity, the passage of time never makes any difference at all. Even in the domain of atrocity, there are protocols that help to negotiate the tricky question of what gets remembered and what gets forgotten. My point is that the emergence of

world literature is putting pressure on those protocols, and is therefore an occasion for articulating them a bit more self-consciously. It's time to get the conversation about these protocols started.

You can have a glimpse of what an expanded temporal field might look like *without* such protocols from a recent book entitled *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (2002) by the historian Stephen Howe. The book begins as follows: "A great deal of the world's history is the history of empires. Indeed it could be said that *all* history is imperial – or colonial – history, if one takes a broad enough definition and goes far enough back." Margaret Doody's "very far back indeed" might well entail, morally speaking, that "everything is empire." Would that mean that everything is barbarism? It's not clear that Margaret Doody's happy "barbarian-lover" posture has taken the full measure of what this would mean. Up to now, following another unarticulated but not entirely unreasonable set of assumptions, critics located in the West have largely chosen to ignore the scorched earth and the piles of corpses that have filled so much of human history before and outside European hegemony. We Western-situated critics have been preoccupied, and perhaps properly so, with the corpses that we ourselves have produced. But what if it turns out, as we gaze into scholarship's newly expanded temporal frame, that looting, sacking, pillaging, and large-scale murdering were more the rule than the exception in human history? What if ethnic cleansing without the slightest qualm of conscience was the norm? It seems more likely than not.

In Djebar's case, the protocols governing the need to forget clearly have to do with the urgencies of the present. Recalling the earlier acts of conquests by the Ottomans and the Arabs would unavoidably relativize the European conquest, and it was the European conquest (which Djebar herself was involved in overturning in her youth) that made the most urgent political demands on memory, especially since the actions and sufferings of the women who fought against the French occupation very largely remained unmemorialized. That said, however, there were and are good political reasons for remembering the conquest of the Berbers by the Arabs – as Djebar does when she talks about writing her book "in a foreign language, not in either of the native tongues of my native country – the Berber of the Dahra mountains or the Arabic of the town where I was born" (Djebar 1985: 204). In recent years, the indigenous peoples of North Africa have mobilized in self-conscious political movements. They have brought their situation in a predominantly Arab culture before the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. One elected member of the Permanent Forum, Hassan Id Balkassm, is himself a Berber. Suddenly, therefore, Djebar has herself become (among her other identities) an indigenous writer, and a conquest that happened in the seventh and eighth centuries does make a claim to be mentioned in the same breath with a conquest that happened in the early nineteenth century.

Deep time in itself offers no guarantee that the protocols that govern remembering and forgetting will be kept open for renegotiation. On the contrary, it seems likely to deny their existence. Dimock's identification of the Americans with the Mongols oddly retains the normal, uncritical use of the Mongols to signify atrocious and inexplicable barbarism. It's as if Genghis Khan's Mongols simply *are* barbarians, and barbarians are still people we don't have to know anything more about even if we

are now expanding our historical frame so that they will take up a great deal more space. This is unacceptable – and it's unacceptable whether indigenous people seem to be making Dimock's own point – as when the Zapatistas present themselves as "products of 500 years of struggle" – or, on the contrary, when a "through the eyes of the 'barbarians'" perspective ends up lifting some of the historical responsibility off the shoulders of the Europeans. As it well may do. Anthropologist Kay Warren writes: "the geographical distribution of indigenous groups does not conform to the colonial units that were the archetypal candidates for decolonization in international law" (Warren 1998: 6). The colonialism from which indigenous peoples have suffered is not exclusively *European* colonialism.

Those who would like to define indigenous peoples as exclusively victims of European colonialism have put forward the so-called "blue water" hypothesis, according to which colonialism is only colonialism if it involved the crossing of water in a ship, not if it was the result of conquest via land. Unsurprisingly, this hypothesis has been strongly urged by China, which posits that it contains no indigenous peoples. But other Asian nations, like the Philippines, Japan, and Indonesia, have rejected this idea, and even China has muted its references. The strain of this position becomes clear if you consider that it would deny the convergence between America's westward expansion in the nineteenth century and Russia's eastward expansion, each of them resulting of course in the conquest of many local populations. (In Russia's case, some of the same populations had been conquered earlier by the Mongols going in the opposite direction.) In this case the effort to save the unique guilt of Europe would plunge us into complete absurdity, absolving European Russia while it also sacrifices the indigenous status of the peoples of the Caucasus and Siberia along with the indigeneity of all other Asians. It seems too high a price to pay in order to save a negative or reverse Eurocentrism, the European monopoly of blame.

While remembering the effects of European conquest, therefore, we are now obliged also to remember how conquered peoples were treated, if indeed they were allowed to live, under previous non-European conquerors. We are obliged to take a long view, which is also a relativizing view. We are probably even obliged to find out something about Genghis Khan and the Mongol conquests. If you go to Wikipedia, you will read the following: "In the Middle East and Iran, [Genghis Khan] is almost universally looked on as a destructive and genocidal warlord who caused enormous damage and destruction to the population of those areas" (Genghis Khan n.d.). In Iran, they say he is despised as much as Alexander the Great. Present-day Mongolians, on the other hand, say that his butchery has been exaggerated by non-Mongolians. In present-day China, there is a mix of positive and negative opinions. Why positive? Well, for example, because his imperial centralization speeded goods along the Silk Road; because although he subdued the Uyghurs, he also adopted their script; because his imperial administration did not emphasize kinship, ethnicity or race, but meritocracy; and because it realized a certain religious tolerance – although a shamanist, he consulted with Christian missionaries and Muslim merchants and a Taoist monk. Is all this irrelevant, given the undoubted brutality of conquest, the sacking and pillaging of captured cities, and the massacre of what we would now call civilian populations? Is it irrelevant that before Baghdad fell to the Mongols in 1258, it had

fallen to the Seljuk Turks in 1055? Is it irrelevant that the Seljuk Turks conquered the area from the Iranian Buwayhids, who had conquered it from the Abbasids – who had themselves conquered it in 750, part of the wave of Arab conquest that followed the birth of Islam? The threat of deep time is to display wave upon wave upon wave of conquest, with nothing to distinguish one conqueror from the last, one moment of meaningless suffering from its predecessor. The imperative to remember everything carries with it the threat of being able to remember nothing at all.

The exercise of memory arguably requires some way of distinguishing – if not good guys from bad guys, then better from worse, or at least difference from sameness, as opposed to an unending succession of conquest and brutality. It involves the emergence of a standard that would permit atrocities to be *named* as atrocities. I note in passing that Dimock herself finds an ingenious if improvised and implausible way of erecting such a standard. By focusing on the destruction of the Baghdad *library*, after both the Mongol and the American invasions, she hints at a moral line separating barbarity from virtue-*as-literacy*. It's as if those Iraqis who were attacked by the Mongols and the Americans could be distinguished from the aggressors by their respect for books. Surely one of the key lessons of Edward Said's *Orientalism* is that such a line is indefensible. Peoples of the book have done no less harm, if also perhaps no more, than peoples without it. Another possible standard might distinguish between nomadic and sedentary peoples, suggesting (vainly, I'm afraid) that virtue is on the side of the latter. For an account of how colonialism has exploited the putative necessity of civilizational conflict between sedentary and nomadic peoples, consult Mahmood Mamdani's books on the atrocities of Sudan and Rwanda, two more cases in which ancestral memories and hatreds have recently been used to arrest all historical analysis. And in which historical analysis might resume, if this did not seem to reinvent the precariously moral materialism of Marx, by pointing to a struggle for scarce resources both between and within the categories of farmers and nomads.

If pushed hard enough, historical analysis probably could make a case in defense of Genghis Khan. That's not my intention. All I want to suggest is that you can't go back into deep time without continuing the *work* of historical analysis, even if that work thereby becomes ethically riskier as well as more difficult. There could be no protocols enabling us to negotiate between forgetting and remembering if there was no way of introducing into the bloody historical plenitude of atrocity some form or degree of significant difference. As we reconsider our planetary meta-narratives, and perhaps also consider whether we can really do without them in the study of world literature, the emergence of that kind of difference is, I think, the key question.

Given the harm that has been done through history by the opposition between civilization and barbarism, it is tempting simply to flip these terms, telling a story in which it is civilization itself that introduces true barbarism into a world that had not yet known what it was. Deep time forces upon us the recognition that this story is contradicted by the historical record. Western secular modernity is of course responsible for innumerable atrocities. But the massacres committed by the Arabs against Assia Djebar's Amazigh ancestors cannot be laid to the account of secular Western modernity, nor can those committed by the Ottomans against the Arabs.

Many of those who were victims of empire also had empires of their own. (On the importance of non-European empires to a world history that would truly avoid Eurocentrism, see Cooper 2005.) If we take a hint from Assia Djebar and recategorize St. Augustine as part Berber, hence as an indigenous writer in dialogue with other indigenous people, then what do we make of the Vandals, who were besieging Augustine's city when he died? Conquerors of Berber lands before the Arabs, the Vandals even satisfied the "blue water" rule, for they came by sea. They were colonizers, yet they are also indigenous people, pushed south and west by the invasions of others. Their name lives on as a synonym for senseless destruction, yet (who knows?) perhaps they did no more looting, pillaging, and large-scale murdering than the more respectable-sounding Goths, or than the Berbers themselves, who also established an empire. Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic cosmopolitan, fought "the barbarians" along the Danube, and then back in Rome had Christians tortured and executed. Of course, the Christians were no kinder and gentler to Jews, pagans, and heretics, and the so-called barbarians along the Danube no doubt had much to answer for themselves. Inspired by the indigenous revival, temporal cosmopolitanism widens the field of ancestors who can be honored. But it also confuses further the distinction between colonizers and colonized, the kinds of knowledge it will be necessary to acquire, and thus the act of bestowing honor itself.

If barbarism, ethnic cleansing, and empire were once everywhere, then it would be only those genres or principles or institutions hesitantly emerging to resist them that could count as significantly new and different. The emergence of these principles and institutions, assuming such an emergence could be shown, would be an emergence in linear secular time, and it would have to count as a significant historical event. (On this set of issues see Cooper 2005.) This event would be part of, though of course not the whole of, secular modernity, which we would thus find ourselves having reinvented. It is arguable, though the argument would have to be made, that the emergence of anti-barbarism principles and anti-barbarism institutions, not necessarily in the West, is an event in which the novel actively participated. If so, this emergence should have a major place in determining how the history of the genre of the novel is told. In which case a detour through deep time would have brought us circuitously back to a version of Ian Watt's rise of the novel, though a less Eurocentric version. This could then become a question usefully addressed to world literature as such: to what extent has it patted on the back those who returned in triumph from conquest and massacre, or merely the bloody maintaining of order, and to what extent has it imagined and elaborated norms by which such conduct could be condemned and avoided?

My proposal could be said to succumb to the danger of presentism that Dimock warns against. Wary of this danger, one might ask whether there is a sense of responsibility to people and events distant from us in time that runs parallel to our recently enlarged sense of responsibility to people and events distant from us in space, and if so, whether what it produces is primarily detachment, like cosmopolitanism in its traditional sense. If there is such a thing as presentism, isn't there also such a thing as pastism? Do we want a fetishizing of anything and everything from the past simply because it *is* past, a burden of total recall (encouraged by the new responsibilities of geographic coverage implicit in "world"

literature) that is likely to paralyze any action to change the present and, indeed, any proper allocation of praise and blame in any of the texts we examine, wherever they are located?

The best adjudication I know between unlimited respect for the pastness of the receding past, on the one hand, and the creative balancing of remembering and forgetting, on the other, is David Damrosch's appeal for world literature to be re-described as elliptical. World literature, Damrosch suggests,

> has oscillated between extremes of assimilation and discontinuity: either the earlier and distant works reflect a consciousness *just like ours*, or they are unutterably alien, curiosities whose foreignness finally tells us nothing and can only reinforce our sense of separate identity. But why should we have to choose between a self-centered construction of the world and a radically decentered one? Instead, we need more of an elliptical approach, to use the image of the geometric figure that is generated from two foci at once. We never truly cease to be ourselves as we read, and our present concerns and modes of reading will always provide one focus of our understanding, but the literature of other times and eras presents us with another focus as well, and we read in the field of force generated between these two foci.
>
> (Damrosch 2003: 133)

World literature is in essence an ethical project because, like the larger project of cosmopolitanism to which it belongs, it asks us to imagine or act out an ethical relation to the world as a whole. That entails, as Damrosch suggests, a critical estrangement from one's own nationality, with its "present concerns and modes of reading," but an estrangement that must always remain incomplete. "We never truly cease to be ourselves as we read." Damrosch seems optimistic that it may not after all be a crippling limitation to remain in some sense "ourselves," and the thought merits further elaboration. Set against "other times and eras," as it is here, being oneself also signifies occupying the present tense. And being a self-in-the-present-tense signifies two quite different things. On the one hand, it signifies the burden of a provinciality or partiality or self-interestedness from which one may need and even want to be released. On the other hand, however, it also signifies the opportunity for an action that will produce change, an opportunity that the past by definition cannot offer and from which we should fear to wander too far away. The study of world literature, however cosmopolitan, can never be the most efficient or momentous of actions, yet action remains a criterion that permits a discrimination of better and worse cosmopolitanisms.

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# 40
# GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN WORLD LITERATURE

*Debra A. Castillo*

Keep these names in mind: Rigoberta Menchú, Malalai Joya, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Or these three: Virginia Woolf, Leslie Marmon Silko, Anna Akhmatova. The first three are activists, from Guatemala, Afghanistan, and Somalia, respectively, whose works (none of them fiction, sometimes co-authored) have become staples of gender studies modules in world literature and culture courses in the United States in the last decades. Ironically, none of them writes "literature" per se – *testimonio* or memoir is more their mode – and they are famous for their gender-inflected social and political activism, not their writing style. Yet because important international awards made these individuals highly visible in the West, their written works have been contextualized and made accessible to us through elegant translations, and we want to include them in our classes to supplement other literary/cultural readings. The second three, all associated with high art, hailing from Great Britain, the United States, and Russia, represent the complete list of the overlap of modern women writers from three standard US anthologies of world literature (Norton, Bedford, and Longman). The only person who also appears in the standard gay/lesbian anthologies is Virginia Woolf, making her the undisputed ruling figure in world gender and sexuality literary studies, something I confirmed by spending far too much time perusing world literature syllabi from various parts of the world.

Fellow Irish author Oscar Wilde seems to be Woolf's crossover counterpart, appearing prominently in gay and unmarked (hence presumed straight) literary anthologies. Of gay non-Europeans, only Japanese writer Yukio Mishima appears more than once (both in Longman and in the Publishing Triangle's list of top 100 gay and lesbian writers), and Cuban poet and novelist José Lezama Lima is the only Latin American figure who appears in both the Publishing Triangle list and the well-regarded *Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature*. Guided by lists like these, we academics and gender studies scholars take our world literature students on globe-trotting trips like human rights tourists on an economy plan, where our travel agent is the globalized publishing industry that defines the stops on our whirlwind tour by making works by these people available to us.

"Does gender have a literary history?" asks Margaret Higonnet, adding: "Does literary history have a gender?" (Higgonet 2009a: 135). The quick perusal of the table of contents of any standard literary history confirms that, by and large, the gender of literary history is indisputably masculine, is centered on the dominant culture, and is presumed to be heterosexual (a case that I am sorry to say is even more insistently prevalent in non-Euro-American literary histories and anthologies familiar to me from Latin America and India, where even the token outsider is mostly absent). Additionally, the history of world literature, as we understand it in the United States, is necessarily limited to materials available in English, privileging for obvious culture-affirming reasons the production from Great Britain and the United States, while including a highly variable sprinkling of works and authors from other parts of the world. To imagine rethinking world literature as a vast compendium of many voices where English and the West is but one thread, seems both urgently necessary and completely unfeasible in current editorial and pedagogical practice, where the need to sell to a textbook market requires what Chandra Mohanty calls "carefully placed and domesticated" token voices (Mohanty 2003: 212), but allows no more than that. Even to question the male heterosexist core would require a vast shift of understanding. Aijaz Ahmad describes an analogous philosophical shift when he notes, for example, that we now know from empirical studies that women perform approximately ⅔ of the world's productive labor. Thus, he theorizes, to ask a Marxist to rethink labor from this knowledge, would mean an entirely different understanding of the proletariat and "hence, a very different idea of what a 'proletarian revolution' would actually look like, in any real sense" (Ahmad 2007: 37). Ahmad's shrewd observation reminds me as well of Jean Franco's comment with respect to gender studies: "For many on the left, feminism is still viewed as if the 'woman question' were somehow separate from the big macho topics of globalization, the financialization of the world, pauperization and the environment, when in fact it is crucially involved in these issues" (Franco 1998). In a parallel manner, we might ask the conceptual question: if we fully accept the implications of the fact that the world is 51 percent female and 10 percent LGBT, and Caucasian men are a distinct minority everywhere, how would one theorize a world literature written from this perspective?

Equally difficult, conceptually, is the question of the literary history of gender and sexuality, which inevitably takes us through a series of intellectual positions that tend to derive from a presumed universalism in our analytic work – the more familiar formalisms of mid- to late twentieth-century feminism, post-feminism, gender studies, masculinity studies, queer theory, transgender theory. Of course, these terms remain controversial in the West, and their meanings continue to be disputed and reworked in the twenty-first century. However, these polemics become even more complex when truisms based on unrecognized culturally grounded understandings are taken as revelant of other social structures. As Ofelia Schutte writes, "the speaker from the dominant culture is basically saying: communicate with me entirely on the terms I expect; beyond this I am not interested. … Alternatively, he may be conscious of such incommensurable elements, but pay special attention to them only when the contrast between cultures involves a strong polarity, as in the cases of Asian or African cultures in contrast to Anglo-American

culture" (Schutte 2000: 56). It is entirely unsurprising in the wake of the often heated exchanges between first and third world gender scholars that Showalter must ask, "Is the feminist intellectual dead?" (Showalter 2000: 131) and Finney will comment, "we don't encounter the word *feminism* as much as we used to" (Finney 2006: 114).

Griselda Pollock makes a parallel observation in her scathing critique of contemporary masculinist intellectual pretensions: "Despite the polite indulgence that has allowed the formal acknowledgement of the place of feminist thought at the table of contemporary cultural theory and practice, the depth of the resistance to thinking 'in, of and from the feminine' is rarely plumbed and fully appreciated until the blockage rears up to ask (please vocalize with the appropriate tone of surprise and scorn): why would it be interesting or important to think anything 'in, of and from the feminine'?" (Pollock 2004: 39). For Melissa Fitch too, the need to rethink our pedagogical enterprise is a central concern. In her recent book, *Side Dishes*, she recalls the response of her undergraduate academic advisor when she asked whether Spanish or Women's Studies would be more advantageous to her in the future: "both of them are useless," he replies (Fitch 2009: 137). Despite the now-canonical status of works by women and people of diverse ethnicity and sexuality in our courses, we have reason to fear that too much of that advisor's dismissiveness still rings true, and little of what we consider essential is considered at all relevant by our non-humanities colleagues, who find our battles uninspiring.

What Showalter calls the "dark lady," the token woman in an otherwise all-male academic circle (Showalter 2000: 136), seems to provide a paradigm for other token admissions to the Western academic club: the gay scholar, the third-world intellectual. Nevertheless the putative solidarity among such token representatives of humanity's vast majorities is both fragile and fungible. When such US and European-based gender and sexuality social movements and the scholarship surrounding them are referenced by non-Euro-Americans speaking about their specific literary and cultural contexts, these vexed arguments tend to come prefaced with a reminder that none of these intellectual structures pertains completely or comfortably to the case at hand, except insofar as that culture has been inflected by the transnational influences of Western globalized perspectives. For example, many prominent third-world academics located in the first world have used the non-transferability of western-flavored terms like "feminist" or "gay" in their cultures of origin as teaching moments for their first-world audiences. At the same time, first-world scholarship has taken an "affective turn," often associated with just such displaced scholars – the token exceptional intellectual of color – many of whom also happen to be gay: José Esteban Muñoz, Sara Ahmed, Jasbir Puar. Puar herself sees this theorization of affect as an ideological move, with respect to "continuing efforts to elaborate different and alternative modalities of belonging, connectivity, and intimacy, a response, in fact, to paradigms that have privileged the deterritorialization of control societies to such an extent that identitarian frames appear no longer relevant" (Puar 2007: 208).

Cross-cultural communication is always vexed, and deforms communication between members of dominant and subaltern cultures on issues related to gender and sexuality: Schutte notes, for instance: "I have become increasingly aware of the levels of prejudice affecting the basic processes of communication between Anglo-American

and Latina speakers" (Schutte 2000: 47). Puar also speaks about missteps of discourse about both gender and sexuality from the US academic perspective. She points, for instance, to what she calls the US belief in its gender exceptionalism, and argues that this kind of position "works as a missionary discourse to rescue Muslim women from their oppressive male counterparts. It also works to suggest that, in contrast to women in the United States, Muslim women are, at the end of the day, unsaveable" (Puar 2007: 5). One might be tempted to dismiss this accusation as stereotyping, were it not so prevalent in discussions relating to international gender and sexuality studies, where relationships of power are linked in inscrutable complexity.

Adds Elisa Glick: "In a global context, the one in which we now inevitably speak, queer theory as a privileged access poses some of the same problems that Dennis Altman discusses … one might ask," with Altman, "whose scripts are being played out … ?" (Glick 2003: 125). Here too the history of gender and sexuality is plagued with what Ariel Levy calls "cultural memory disorders," durable images of events that never happened, or happened differently (Levy 2009: 78), and that nonetheless shape our conceptions of movement ideology and goals, our imaginary tracing of the influence of feminist and queer studies on dominant culture agendas. For Latin Americanist Daniel Balderston, the US penchant for rewriting history has meant that Anglo Americans are always placed at the center, even as individual scholars recognize the imperial hubris of this script both in national terms as well as in ethnic ones, as it very noticeably writes African American and Latino/a LGBT activists out of the major strands of the genealogy (Balderston 2003: 132–33). Scholars like these have likewise pointed out the related and, until recently, under-recognized imperialism in much of internationalized queer theory, which, as is the case for internationalized feminism, has led to accusations of a parallel missionary zeal on the part of US-based thinkers. Thus, the standard script for queer studies almost unconsciously tends to relate international gay rights to the US civil rights movement of the 1960s. But in this assumed history, as Glick notes, the US propensity to see things in black and white racial terms has oversimplified history to an absurd caricature, by including acknowledgment of the importance of the black power movement, but leaving out the Chicano movement, the Native American rights activists, and 1980s women of color and Queer Nation struggles (Glick 2003: 126). How, then, does one bring this incomplete and stumbling history to the international academic table? Says Glick: "We forget that our theories are tools, not all-or-nothing worldviews. … *Queer* cannot be discussed in terms of sexuality or gender alone, because it is not through sex and gender alone that we live our complex lives" (128).

Patricia Richards, without disagreeing on these points, would make at least one sobering addendum on the canny manipulation of co-dependency by some subaltern subjects, even across a divide of justified mistrust. She describes a meeting between a Mapuche women's organization and Chilean government officials charged with gender-related issues, in which she was privileged to participate. Afterwards, she is taken aback by a comment from one of the Mapuche participants: "You know, Patricia, if you were not here, we would never have had this meeting" (Richards 2006: 17). Richards hastens to clarify that this statement does not constitute praise for the efficacy of her limited fieldwork with the Mapuches, but rather an

acknowledgment that it is only through the appearance of a Western researcher that native women are able to gain access to their own country's government agencies. Likewise, when Arias points out that Guatemalan Maya women have been able to organize successfully – "showing that ostensibly premodern subjects were capable of grasping all the tools that modernity could offer them and of asserting their difference to transform themselves and reimagine their communities within the framework of a legitimate political conflict" (Arias 2009: 1877) – he signals a similar network of convenient alliances. It is humbling, and deeply disturbing, to realize how inexperienced and unprepared we are to even listen to international exchanges of views, how little our theorizations of affect and ethics bridge our readings of texts and the urgent social needs outlined in them. There is, however, a lesson implicit in Arias' and Richards' work with Native women: Western scholars serious about world literature need to undo theoretical presumptions and engage in a collaborative process to identify what knowledge is useful, to whom, and how it can be used.

Unfortunately, moreover, it is not just that metropolitan theoretical discourse only partially and imperfectly maps onto other situations. Even worse: the selective representation of reality in metropolitan discourse may depend upon discriminatory projects as its very foundation, hence its intransigence. For Ofelia Schutte, "the nature of knowledge is not culture free," and she argues that, for example, "critiques of cultural imperialism are themselves based on masculinist (often highly authoritarian) models of liberation from imperialism" (Schutte 2000: 49). Similarly, in an acute critique of Slavoj Žižek, for example, Catherine Walsh points out the patterns of patronization in his thinking and argues that "the cultural logic of global capitalism comes to serve as a modern day form of colonization that obfuscates and at the same time maintains the colonial difference through the discursive rhetoric of multiculturalism" (Walsh 2002: 83). Oscar Guardiola-Rivera adds a recognition of "the constitutive role of gender in producing colonial spatial differentiation and actual globalized epistemic differentiation" (Guardiola-Rivera 2007: 29), asking us to think about the consequences of such a theoretical framework. In a more responsible body of inquiry, these unequal global exchanges of theoretical capital would be ameliorated by analyses that recognize the limitations and shortcomings of metropolitan thought, not only taking account of the fundamental challenges of local cultural effects, but also by amending shortsighted projects so as to more fully engage transnational thinking – and specifically a transnational body of thought that sees how constructions of gender and sexuality inextricably engage colonial and globalized geopolitics of knowledge.

One might argue that, in the twenty-first century, the internet is taking up responsibility for serving as a world literature clearinghouse, and indeed this is true in many ways, although with the caveat of the internet's distinct English bias and still limited reach in many parts of the world. Thus, for example, the online magazine *Words without Borders*, founded by former senior editors from Norton, *Zoetrope*, and Simon and Schuster, has an explicit pedagogical mission, and one that takes advantage of the fact of global English as the most important second language in the world: "*Words without Borders* translates, publishes, and promotes the finest contemporary international literature. Our publications and programs open doors for readers of English around the world to the multiplicity of viewpoints, richness of experience,

and literary perspective on world events offered by writers in other languages. We seek to connect international writers to the general public, to students and educators, and to print and other media and to serve as a primary online location for a global literary conversation." A shared community, thus, is established not by identity politics but, rather, through the more tenuous linkages of cyberspace, to a community of reading practice. Recent issues have been highly sensitive to discussions of gender and sexuality; the May issue, "Mean girls and bad boys," featured authors translated from Spanish, Afrikaans, Catalan, Italian, Portuguese, Danish, Norwegian, German, and French; in June, "The Queer issue" included Greek, Finnish, Hebrew, French, Indonesian, Polish, German, and Russian texts; and the argument would not be difficult that the July issue ("Sports") also implicitly addresses these questions.

In another global English context, though one different in form, we find Shobna Kumar's online bookstore, Queer Ink, catering specifically to the Indian audience. Kumar's bookstore responds to a new opening in Indian society, after section 377 of the penal code criminalizing homosexuality was struck down in 2009. She sees her effort as opening a platform for authors and readers in multiple ways. As a first step, the online bookstore is a fundamental need because, says Kumar, "most people find it difficult to walk into a store and search for books on queer stuff. Who wants to face the smirks … ?" (Lobo 2010). Thus, she has selected several dozen works by gay and lesbian authors from South Asia, alongside offerings of queer fiction and nonfiction by international authors, and made them available for purchase. The mission statement of Queer Ink is more ambitious than merely selling books, however, and points to a broader construction of community that will also include other fora: "In an era of social networks, when cliques are rapidly formed and as easily dissolved, the Qi Community aims to become something of longstanding value, its longevity stemming from allowing each person to breathe and embrace their true natures without worrying about niggling rules. The power of the written word is as good a means as any to bind people together, especially those already marked out as different and marching to their own drummers, whether as majorettes in outer space, or tin soldiers in the sand. This is, after all, a special community for all you special cases out there. Membership is free, just bring along your own incandescent spirits." The spirit animating this effort runs parallel to Jasbir Jain's observation about the place of gender studies in India in general, where it has no firm foothold in either academia or public discourse. Jain worries that "feminism has taken women out of the margin only to deposit them in a ghetto," citing novelist Shashi Deshpande, who notes that this "is a deeply frustrating experience for the writer, it denies us the place and dignity of a writer who is speaking about human concerns" (Jain 2009: 223).

Despite the promise of the internet, books still remain the most stable platform for knowledge distribution, and print anthologies speak to an overt pedagogical mission, as they market themselves for textbook use. For purposes of a simple comparison, in what follows I will look a bit more closely at the contents of three leading English-language anthologies, focusing on the twentieth century (which both matches my background expertise and, handily, tends to reference the sections of these anthologies with the greatest diversity of voices), and will contrast them, even more briefly, with leading Spanish-language textbooks.

As Higonnet notes, "women's texts in world literature remain daunting to teach, especially for periods before the twentieth century" (Higgonet 2009b: 233). One might optimistically surmise that, since men whom we now identify as gay have always been included in such world literature anthologies, it would be far less daunting to address questions of sexuality. Joseph Massad has, however, succinctly defined the problem of reinterpreting figures from the distant past like Plato and Sappho according to contemporary Western cultural definitions, as such interpretations lead to methodological errors. Equally problematic, he argues, is the application of current queer understandings to contemporary non-Western cultures: "The error here is not merely political, where sexual liberation and a commitment to the affirmation of sexual minorities are at stake. It is, more egregiously, epistemological, where sexual desires and practices can be viewed only through a postbinarized world" (Massad 2009: 247). Even the greatest vigilance is insufficient to guard against these well-meaning missteps.

I have found nothing in the Spanish-language market exactly parallel to the very ample, multi-volume US anthology of world literature. Instead, the Spanish-language market leans toward the single-volume work, aimed at a high school or introductory college course market, with the expected problems. Few women authors tend to find their way into such condensed works, and any representation of perspectives from diverse sexualities would be entirely accidental, and more to be deplored than celebrated. Thus, the publisher Plaza Mayor offers an anthology of world literature that in its 312 pages includes sixty-four authors and promises to cover all major figures from ancient Greece, Rome, and Asia to contemporary times. Likewise, the standard textbook edited by José Calero Heras in 1999 for Octaedro promises the same, although it offers a heightened emphasis on specific regional authors by tailoring versions of its contents for central Spain, Catalunya, and Latin America: *Literatura española y universal*, *Literatura hispanoamericana y universal* and *Literatura catalana y universal*, each about 250 pages long. Algaida's survey of modern and contemporary literature includes twenty-eight authors, none of them women, although two of the anthology's featured texts (selections from Bizet's *Carmen* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*) highlight women protagonists, and the inclusion of Whitman and Wilde could arguably be understood as a gesture towards queer authors.

In my admittedly unscientific survey of Spanish-language anthologies of world literature, *Antología de literatura universal comparada*, edited by Julián Rodríguez, offers the most ample selection of potential texts for a Spanish or Latin American teacher interested in introducing students to the study of gender and sexuality. The book is 572 pages long, and includes 129 entries (with some repetition of authors between sections). The volume includes a basic sampling of classical Greek and Latin texts, but its emphasis is mostly on modern English- and Spanish-language authors, with a few who wrote in German or French. The bulk of the book focuses on high art works, but because it is aimed at the high school audience, it also includes Beatles song lyrics and one of the Andersen fairy tales. The only modern non Euro-American authors included in the volume are Rabindranath Tagore (India) and Efua Sutherland (Ghana). Rodríguez includes an eclectic selection of thirteen women, two of whom (Alice Walker and Efua Sutherland) are of African descent. The other women are: Emily Dickinson, Mary Shelley, Beatrix Potter, Christina Rossetti, Carson

McCullers, and Shirley Jackson, who appear alongside Spanish writers Ana Maria Matute, Marina Mayoral, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Carme Riera, and Mercedes Salisachs. The twenty-four units of this volume do not, however, offer much purchase for serious gender analysis. They are not ordered by author or literary historical period, but rather, framed in terms of an explicit aesthetic project, presented as a broad-strokes narrative. The units begin with an exploration of the concepts of "lo bello, lo puro y la creación" [the beautiful, the pure, creativity] before moving to the question of the machine in the garden, the vulnerability of the concept of beauty, the issue of ugliness, and finally, "atisbos del re-surgir vital" [signs of a vital resurgence] and "colapso paulatino de la sociedad y un nuevo comienzo desde el principio" [gradual collapse of society and new commencement from the beginning]. Each brief selection is accompanied by discussion questions that frame analysis in terms of these aesthetic qualities.

When I turn to the United States, the multi-volume anthology prevails; this is certainly the case in the competing anthologies published by Norton, Bedford, and Longman, each with six volumes. Here, for convenience, I focus on the twentieth-century volume, which has the advantage noted by Higonnet of a potentially greater diversity in voices. Notably, the percentages of women authors are stable across all these works. Bedford's Volume 6 has eighty-eight authors, eighteen of them women. Longman's Volume F includes ninety writers of whom twenty are women. Longman also highlights a total of twenty authors, with more complete selections from their works; of these twenty featured authors, four are women (Woolf and Akhmatova, representing modernism, along with Eileen Chang and Mahasweta Devi in the gender secton). Norton's Volume F has seventy authors, seventeen of them women, of whom five (Joyce Mansour, Alfonsina Storni, Doris Lessing, Eileen Chang, and Clarice Lispector) are new to the expanded edition, making this anthology – at 24 percent representation by women authors – the industry leader, over the more standard 20 percent in the competitors. There are, as I noted above, three women authors common to all the anthologies; there are also five other writers who appear in at least two of the three anthologies: Fadwa Tuquan (Palestine), Anita Desai and Mahasweta Devi (India), Eileen Chang (China), and Clarice Lispector (Brazil). Other women authors represented in the three anthologies include a total of thirteen additional British and US writers, five Europeans, three Japanese, three Middle Easterners, three north Africans, two sub-Saharan Africans, three indigenous voices, two additional authors from India, and another Latin American writer.

Where the women appear in these texts is also important. Thus, for instance, the women writers in Longman are concentrated in two sections: those on indigenous literature (where none of them is a featured author), and on gender (which features works by Chang and Devi). The supplementary indigenous writers section includes selections from works by four women out of a total of seven authors, including two Australians – one man and one woman; three US women, one US man, and a Tuareg man. The gendered spaces material that supplements the main texts by Chang and Devi includes seven additional authors: five women (from Brazil, Morocco, Ghana, Lebanon, and Antigua), a gay man (Goytisolo), and a straight man (García Márquez). Thus, the "indigenous" section doubles as a "gender" section because of its relative richness of texts by women authors and the potential for

comparative analysis, and the "gender" section doubles as a non-Western cluster, the only such grouping in the volume other than the one dedicated to "post-colonial conditions." Suggestively, the particular selections in all three of these non-Western sections implicitly ask us to think about how genre is associated with race as well as with gender, highlighting, perhaps, more vernacular, more personally charged, more overtly ideological forms: hence, perhaps, our preparedness to hear the voices of Rigoberta Menchú, Malalai Joya, or Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

Ross's analysis of the Norton anthology would be equally relevant to Bedford and Longman as well. He adduces two principles of selection: the first is based on a vague concept of "universality" (used primarily to refer to Western "masterpieces," and often meaning in practice that shared understanding derives from their status as imperial texts). The second principle, used for non-imperial texts, is their "political setting or timing," that is, their ability to provide a window onto a culture that US students need to know about to avoid parochialism. In order to avoid academic tourism, he posits, we appeal to solidarity, but the criteria are inconsistent, problematic on both ends. Ross points out, for example, that women and non-Americans or Europeans tend to be described with respect to biography and culture rather than aesthetic merit, meaning, among other things, that their works are easy to relegate to a politically correct category of literary also-rans, and "the list of important geographic centers looks dated even as I summarize it." The alternative principle of inclusion, on enduring aesthetic principles, provides no assistance, since it relies on a biased understanding of artistry derived from canonical Western masterpieces: "The principle of selection for the six volumes of *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, one must conclude, is as much culturally determined as it is based on strictly literary principles … If cosmopolitanism is the proper answer, the question remains, what author is truly international? In other words, who should be on everyone's reading list, in every country?" (Ross 2006) These questions, ultimately, are as interesting to ponder as they are impossible to answer.

British philosopher Denise Riley meticulously traces foundational discussions of ethics in Western philosophy, and argues, in summary, that in such formulations women could not logically be moral agents, since ethics require autonomy, and women in Hegel and Kant can only be conceived "in relation" (Riley 1988: 41). This would seem to be a historical argument, except that even today, says Riley, woman and the idea of the social remain rolled together (65) such that "feminism never has the option of putting forward its own uncontaminated, self-generated understandings of 'women'" (68). With respect to our understanding of what is world literature, her argument remains equally powerful. The very nature of dominant culture means that discussions of gender and sexuality, like discussions of ethnicity, will always be developed "in relation." Ofelia Schutte counsels humility. "There is always a residue of meaning that will not be reached" (Schutte 2000: 50) in cross-cultural work, and in these inevitably relational exchanges, "what remains to be understood … – that is the incommensurability of something not subject to perfect cultural translation – may actually be the most important part of the message my Anglophone interlocutor needs to receive" (53). Since a more balanced understanding of world literature remains a distant goal, perhaps we can press for this nearer objective of remembering to study all texts "in relation."

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# 41
# WORLD LITERATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*Ursula K. Heise*

Most of the texts that ecocritics have studied since the emergence of their field in the early 1990s have achieved distinction in particular national traditions of nature writing – such as those of Britain, Germany or the United States – without attaining the international circulation that would integrate them into the canon of world literature. Exploring the relationship between world literature and the environment, therefore, involves several different tasks, each accompanied by its own set of analytical challenges. The concept of "environmental world literature," to begin with, conjures up texts from the 1800s to the present that have inspired environmentalist thinkers and movements beyond their own context of origin to stand up for the conservation of the natural world. Many of these texts, from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and the writings of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (1972), Gary Snyder's nature poetry and, in our own day, the works of Indian activists Vandana Shiva and Arundhati Roy have been read by audiences around the globe. Yet most of them have exerted their influence on account of their ideas rather than their aesthetic merit, and have thereby remained outside of what is usually considered "literary."

A second task consists of tracing environmental concerns in works of world literature that for the most part do not engage with nature directly, but presuppose certain views of the natural even as they focus on issues of selfhood, sovereignty, or nationality. Ecocritics have undertaken the work of unearthing these views in authors such as Shakespeare, Goethe, and Rushdie. A third set of concerns relates to texts such as those of William Wordsworth, Mário de Andrade, or Aimé Césaire, which tend to address humans' relation to nature quite explicitly, but not specifically in the environmentalist sense of human threats to landscapes and other species. Such texts, too, have been studied in depth by ecocritics, if not usually with an eye to their transnational circulation. This essay will undertake a fourth task that has so far attracted little attention among either ecocritics or scholars of world literature (though postcolonial ecocriticism has begun to take steps in this direction – cf. Huggan and Tiffin 2010): tracing the outlines of an environmental world literature canon that has begun to take shape over the last three decades, with works that are

currently being translated and circulated through a variety of languages and cultures as texts whose principal – if not always exclusive – focus is on the ecological crises of the last half-century.

The texts I will discuss are all novels, as environmentalist works have most readily moved across cultural boundaries in this genre. Environmentally oriented poetry, in which Britain, Germany and the United States, for example, can each boast of a long tradition, has remained much more confined to national readerships, as have the relatively few environmentalist plays written to date. The environmentalist novels I will focus on here all build a consciousness of cultural boundaries, encounters, and misunderstandings into the very texture of their plots, thereby exploring in fictional form how basic concepts such as "nature," "ecology," "pollution," or "the animal" mean quite different things in different cultural contexts and lead to divergent environmentalisms and anti-environmentalisms. In some cases, these different cultural perspectives on ecology complement each other and are reconciled in the end, whereas in others, they remain at odds. In each case, questions of ecology are inextricably entangled with questions of racial, ethnic, gender, national, or international politics that shape particular individuals' and communities' engagements with environmental crisis. By modeling such networks of cultural and political meanings that accrue around the concept of "nature," these novels help to foreground the importance of cultural differences in understanding how global ecological crises play themselves out, and how they might be addressed.

The novels that I will discuss as a sample to begin the "morphology" (in Vladimir Propp's sense) of such a contemporary environmental world literature include a Caribbean, two Indian, and one Chinese text: Mayra Montero's *Tú, la oscuridad* [In the Palm of Darkness, 1995], Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* (2007), and Jiang Rong's 狼图腾 [*Lang tu teng*; Wolf Totem, 2004]. All of these novels stage an encounter – in some cases, a collision – of cultural perspectives around a scenario of environmental crisis with sometimes explicit and sometimes implied global implications. The Cuban-Puertorican novelist Mayra Montero and the Indian writer Amitav Ghosh construct this scenario through the familiar high-modernist technique of parallax, the presentation of several characters' different perspectives on the same events. Both of them base their narratives on the journey of an American scientist to the developing world so as to highlight the conflict and convergence of perspectives on the natural world from the global North and the global South. Sinha forces his readers to see the world through the eyes of a character physically handicapped and impoverished by the Bhopal disaster, whose access to a great number of other victims allows a variety of perspectives to emerge – among them, those of an American doctor, who seems the most exotic of all in this framework. Jiang shows urban Han Chinese students during the Cultural Revolution encountering the, to them, quite alien nomadic life of herders in Inner Mongolia, and attempting to integrate themselves into this vanishing way of life, in an eco-cultural reversal of a different sort. All of these texts show cultural and ecological modes of understanding and translation to be closely interwoven, though they do so to different effect.

In *Tú, la oscuridad*, a novel that one critic has called the Caribbean's first "avowedly environmentalist novel" (Paravisini-Gebert 2005: 194), the American

herpetologist Victor Grigg travels to Haiti to search for a specimen – perhaps the last – of an extremely rare frog species, the *grenouille du sang* (*Eleutherodactylus sanguineus*). His account of the search, along with his memories and reflections, alternates with that of his Haitian guide, Thierry Adrien, who is intimately familiar with Haiti's ecology, has encountered the frog before, and can lead Grigg to where it might be found. Two very different national, educational, and familial histories emerge from the juxtaposition, which culminates in the encounter between two different kinds of knowledge of the natural world. Grigg embodies Western science with its endeavor to classify and catalogue as well as to conserve biodiversity, whereas Adrien's knowledge derives from first-hand observation, experience, and long-term cohabitation with the local fauna and flora. Grigg is associated with literacy, as he keeps notebooks on his scientific findings, whereas he records the illiterate Adrien's stories and information with a tape recorder. He naïvely assumes that his scientific endeavor protects him from political danger, believing that "[n]othing very serious can happen to a man when all he looks for, all he wants, is a harmless little frog" (41); Adrien, by contrast, is fully aware that political neutrality is far from any guarantee of safety when Grigg carries out his search in territory that is sought after by competing armed political groups. Their ecological awareness also differs, in that Grigg focuses exclusively on the world-wide endangerment and extinction of amphibian species, whereas Adrien knows about the disappearance of a wide range of species from local places: "You want to know where the frogs go. I cannot say, sir, but let me ask you a question: Where did our fish go? Almost all of them left this sea, and in the forest the wild pigs disappeared, and the migratory ducks and even the iguanas for eating, they went too," he declares (11). Yet they converge on a sense of pervasive ecological decline.

It is the sense of a globally threatened natural world that complements the ecological and political specificities of Haiti as a setting for the novel. Montero goes to great lengths to emphasize that the search for last specimens of endangered species is very far indeed from just one scientist's personal obsession. On their hikes to remote habitats in Haiti, Grigg and Adrien encounter another biologist, a botanist who is searching for a female specimen of a very rare kind of cactus, *Pereskia quisqueyana*, of which only male individuals are extant. And as if Grigg's own notes on frog species going extinct in various regions of the world were not enough, the novel's chapters are interspersed with brief, matter-of-fact vignettes, each of which summarizes current knowledge about the endangered status or outright extinction of frog species from Australia to Switzerland, from Costa Rica to the United States. It is the global scenario of massive biodiversity loss among both animals and plants that forms the backdrop for the encounter of cultures and knowledge formations in Montero's novel.

Ultimately, the differences between local and scientific knowledge, between literacy and illiteracy, are overshadowed by this global panorama of extinction, which neither form of knowledge seems able to arrest. Grigg and Adrien locate and capture the last specimen of the *grenouille du sang*, kill it, and prepare it as a specimen to be studied in detail at a later time. But then Haiti's political turmoil overtakes them, and both men are forced, for different reasons, to leave the island of Hispaniola precipitously, embarking on the same ship in 1993. The ship is caught in a storm

and sinks: "Nearly two thousand people died in the tragedy. The bodies of the scientist and his Haitian assistant, Mr. Thierry Adrien, were never recovered. The last, carefully preserved specimen of the *grenouille du sang* was lost with them at sea," the novel concludes (183), laconically recording yet another extinction in addition to the many it has already catalogued. But if the encounter between Grigg and Adrien achieves nothing scientifically or ecologically, the disappearance of the natural world has nevertheless brought the two men together in a temporary bond across linguistic, racial, and cultural boundaries, and it is in the value of this bond, however fragile it might seem, that Montero invests her novel's narrative capital. Ecological understanding may be culturally framed in very different ways, but the experience of mass extinction transcends such differences.

Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) stages a cultural-ecological encounter in many ways parallel to the one Montero portrays, though the novel complicates the perspectives and translation problems involved. A young American biologist of Indian descent, Piyali Roy, travels to the Sundarbans archipelago in the Bay of Bengal to do research on a rare species of river dolphin. Like Grigg, she enlists the help of a native guide, the fisherman Fokir, whose illiteracy is, like Thierry Adrien's, amply made up for by his intimate knowledge of the region and his uncanny powers of observation. But on her journey, she also encounters Kanai Dutt, a translator and businessman from Delhi who travels to the Sundarbans to visit his aging aunt, and to whose urban habits the wetlands jungle is far more alien than to Piya's biological passions. He comes to serve as translator between Piya and Fokir, and seeks to sober her up when she raves that "'Fokir's abilities as an observer are really extraordinary. I wish I could tell you what it was like to be with him these last few days – it was one of the most exciting experiences of my life" (221). He responds drily, "And all that while you couldn't understand a word he was saying, could you?" (222).

> "No," she said with a nod of acknowledgment. "But you know what? There was so much in common between us it didn't matter."
>
> "Listen," said Kanai in a flat, harsh voice. "You shouldn't deceive yourself, Piya: there wasn't anything in common between you then and there isn't now. Nothing. He's a fisherman and you're a scientist. What you see as fauna he sees as food. … You're from different worlds, different planets."
>
> (222)

The reader may be tempted to write off this fierce dismissal as a sign of Kanai's jealousy, since it is clear that he has become erotically interested in Piya.

Yet events seem to bear him out. The next day, the team finds itself near a village that has trapped a man-eating Bengal tiger in a livestock barn, with a mob of enraged villagers ready to burn the animal. Piya is horrified and seeks for a way to stop what she considers a pointless destruction of life. She appeals to Fokir for help, but he is assisting one of the villagers in sharpening his bamboo spear for the kill and simply carries her away from the mob and back to the boat. "That's the most horrifying thing I've ever seen – a tiger set on fire," Piya exclaims, in an unwitting allusion to Blake's famous poem (244). The next day, she apologizes to Kanai for having misinterpreted Fokir's view of nature. "'But what did you expect, Piya?' Kanai said. 'Did

you think he was some kind of grass-roots ecologist? He's not. He's a fisherman – he kills animals for a living'" (245). "He says when a tiger comes into a human settlement, it's because it wants to die" (244). Yet the killing scene not only contrasts the scientific perspective with that of the subsistence farmer or fisherman, it also highlights very different views of animals as either what threatens humans or what is threatened by them. Do the rights of endangered animals take precedence over that of impoverished humans, or vice versa? The same concern surfaces in another sub-plot of the novel, the attempt by displaced Indian villagers to settle in the Sundarbans; their expulsion and massacre at the hands of the Indian government raises urgent questions about the comparative needs of impoverished humans and endangered animals as they compete for the assistance of governments and environmentalists. These questions, foregrounded since the 1980s by the environmental justice movement, lie at the heart of the novel's cultural and ecological (mis)translations.

If the burning of the tiger seems to signal the breakdown of the hope that an intimate connection with nature might enable cultural translations beyond language, the rest of the novel nuances this conclusion. Kanai, the multilingual translator who delves deeply into the region's mythology about the natural world through his uncle's writing, is unnerved and transformed by the actual wild surroundings, but does end up planning future visits even after his return to the city. Piya develops plans for a long-term study project in the Sundarbans and continues to work with Fokir. She and Fokir are trapped on a tree together during a cyclone and watch an enormous tiger dive into the river to save itself from the objects the storm hurtles at them, in an inversion of the earlier tiger scene. But one of these objects kills Fokir and leaves her tied to his corpse, waiting for the storm to pass: "it was as if the storm had given them what life could not; it had fused them together and made them one" (321). A shade melodramatic, this scene nevertheless reaffirms Piya's initial intuition that cultural and linguistic differences can be transcended by an underlying existential commitment to the natural world, since it is the sheer force of nature that melds their bodies together. Piya continues her work beyond Fokir's death, while Kanai devotes himself to writing the story of his uncle's unusual notebook: both the scientific and the humanistic, mythological, and narrative explorations of the Sundarbans ecosystem, in Ghosh's broader panorama, move ahead, even though this ending also suggests that Fokir's vernacular perspective, the directly lived connection with nature, can survive only through its literate translations. This is implicitly confirmed by the novel's structure, in which both Piya and Kanai, but not Fokir, function as narrative focalizers: we see the world alternately through their eyes, whereas Fokir is merely looked at by them.

Ghosh, then, takes Montero's narrative parallax one step further, not confining himself to a simple juxtaposition of global North and global South, but also highlighting the contrasts and tensions between cosmopolitan and local perspectives in the developing world (cf. Mukherjee 2011: 183). Indra Sinha, in his novel *Animal's People* (2007), pushes Montero's technique into a different direction by forcing his readers to see the world through the eyes of an illiterate Indian victim of an environmental crisis caused by Americans. Janvaar or "Animal" has grown up among the poorest of the poor in the city of Khaufpur (an Urdu pun on "terror"), a fictional counterpart to Bhopal, where an explosion at the Union Carbide plant in 1984

released poisonous gases that killed at least two thousand people immediately and caused the deaths of tens of thousands more in subsequent years. Animal has adopted his name because his exposure to the gases as a toddler has deformed his spine so drastically that he can only walk on all fours and, not a little defiantly, he refuses to consider himself part of human society. As in the real negotiations with Dow Chemical, the corporation that took over Union Carbide, the citizens of Khaufpur are still embroiled, twenty years after the disaster, in litigation in which representatives of the "Kampani" have not even bothered to show up in court, let alone to pay the victims any compensation for deaths, injuries, or the continuing contamination of their wells with toxic substances.

Animal's raunchy, sarcastic account of life mired in a hell of poverty, illness and pollution takes an unexpected turn when an American "doctress," Elli Barber, opens a free clinic in Khaufpur. Local leaders who suspect her to be in cahoots with the Kampani cause the entire population to boycott her clinic in spite of their dire need for medical treatment. Barber, who has given up her career in the US to help redress the consequences of what she considers her country's criminal corporate recklessness, becomes increasingly exasperated with what to her are unintelligible cultural responses to pervasive injustice, disease, and contamination:

> "This is the strangest thing of all about Khaufpur, that people put up with so much. Take a look. It's not just blacked out streets and killer traffic, people in this city tolerate open sewers, garbage everywhere, poisoned wells, poisoned babies, doctors who don't do their jobs, corrupt politicians, thousands of sick that no one seems to care about. But wait, let someone come along with an open-hearted offer of help, these same citizens can't tolerate it, in fact find it so intolerable they must mount a boycott. People in this city must be either blind or mad. I don't get the way Khaufpuris think."
> (151)

After this rare switch to the perspective of the visitor from the global North (which takes up a great deal more space in Montero and Ghosh), Barber, not one to be easily defeated, puts out a petition to lift the boycott for Khaufpuris to sign, directing it, in yet another misunderstanding, at a man who actually opposed the boycott from the start. Her energy and vigor in attempting to make the clinic work are juxtaposed with the elderly, Mother Teresa-like French nun Mère Ambrosine, who has been mentally disturbed since the poison gas disaster but refuses to leave the city where she has spent most of her life. The trauma of that night has caused her to lose her fluent Hindi and indeed the ability to understand any language other than French, the only language she now considers human. Quite different modes of the global North's engagement with the economic and ecological exploitation of the global South, and different models of empathy and charity, are here portrayed through the eyes of Animal, a character who seems to have no agency at all, yet who helps to precipitate some of the central plot events through his role as a "pícaro" who has access to all the major characters (Nixon 2009: 444, 451–54).

In this role, the initially illiterate Animal acquires several languages and the ability to read and write, though he prefers to record his story on tape rather than in print:

"There's a lot to tell … the world's unspoken languages are rushing into my head," he confesses at the beginning (Sinha 2007: 11), indicating a linguistic competence that reaches beyond the human realm. And he exclaims:

> "Hah! This story has been locked up in me, it's struggling to be free, I can feel it coming. … the poet Qaif Khaufpuri, when he grew old his poetry dried up inside him, an ulcer came on his leg, an open mouth that wouldn't go, one day it began reciting such sweet verses, his poems were trying to burst their way out of him. Same way is this, a story sung by an ulcer."
>
> (12)

The body disfigured and dehumanized by environmental crisis becomes the means of transmitting narrative in this vision. Rather than the natural world in and of itself, it is this deformed body that creates a cultural bridge in Sinha's novel, a means of understanding how ecological relationships play themselves out in divergent cultural and socio-economic contexts, and how they are themselves embedded in global networks (cf. Nixon 2009).

The examples of an emergent environmental world literature I have mentioned so far all focus on the encounter between global-North and global-South perspectives. But that is not invariably the case. The Chinese writer Lü Jiamin published 狼图腾 in 2004 under the pseudonym Jiang Rong. The novel deals with what appears at first to be a specifically Chinese topic, the encounter of a Beijing student during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s with the culture of nomadic herdsmen in Inner Central Mongolia. Still, its international appeal is testified to by its already having been or being translated into twenty languages – into English in 2008 under the title *Wolf Totem*. It has also been awarded more than half a dozen literary prizes, in addition to having sold many millions of copies in legitimate and pirated editions in China. The student, Chen Zhen, becomes fascinated with the Mongolians' way of life and their close relation to the wildlife of the grasslands, particularly the wolves that the Mongolians both hunt and venerate. Jiang develops this encounter into an at times rather heavy-handed nationalist and ethnic allegory that contrasts the wild, fierce, powerful, and independent Mongolian nomads, metaphorically identified with the wolves, with the weak, obedient, and sheep-like Han Chinese farmers, who are the dominant political power but fail to understand the grasslands culture they dominate.

Chen Zhen's longing to integrate himself into this wilder, freer way of life and into the cult of the "wolf totem," among other things through a doomed attempt to raise a wolf cub in captivity, evokes strains of anti-modern, anti-technological, and anti-intellectual sentiment that are familiar, at least in residual form, in many advanced modern cultures. While these motifs might go some way toward explaining *Wolf Totem*'s extraordinary popularity, the book also engages with ecological sustainability and collapse in astonishing detail – but without ever so much as mentioning any modern environmentalist vocabulary. Jiang contrasts the Mongols' apparently cruel, but strictly rule-bound, limited, and disciplined exploitation of other animal species ranging from the wolf to the gazelle and the marmot with the indiscriminate extermination campaigns the Chinese carry out when they begin to prepare the grasslands

for sedentary agricultural use. While it is difficult for a Western reader not to resist the masculinism and inherent social Darwinism of Jiang's vision, many of the Mongol characters' statements might as well come from the mouths of modern environmentalists. One of them remarks, for example, that "No grassland Mongol would break the rules of our ancestors, which is why, after hunting marmots for hundreds of years, we still have marmot meat to eat, marmot skin to sell, and marmot oil to use" (477) – a practice that would fall under the category of "sustainable use" in Western environmentalist vocabulary. The same goes for wolf hunting: merciless though the Mongol hunters may appear in their killing rituals, they are themselves appalled when the Chinese begin to exterminate wolves from moving vehicles and by means of new types of rifles, poisons, and traps that leave the wolves little chance for survival. As Chen reflects disconsolately, "What should have been a tense battle between man and wolf now became nothing more than entertainment for humans. … The Mongolian wolves, having dominated the grassland for thousands of years, were now more pathetic than rabbits" (454).

The lengthy expostulations on the Mongol way of life that an elder named Bilgee delivers to the Beijing students may appear overly didactic at first sight, yet on closer analysis they turn into similarly fascinating reflections on ecological understanding and misjudgment. Jiang's study of a sustainable traditional culture being replaced by a modern one that recklessly exploits nature may resonate with his Chinese readers, particularly as a metaphorical critique of the Cultural Revolution's political excesses. But for his international audience, it is also a more general reflection on modernization processes that have transformed ecologies and ways of life around the world. When Chen returns to Inner Mongolia thirty years after his student period, he finds the wolves extinct, the soils eroded, the landscape desertified, and nomadic herd culture a thing of the past:

> Standing alone by his window, Chen looked off to the north with a sense of desolation. The wolves had receded into legend, and the grassland was a distant memory. A nomadic herding society was now extinct; even the last trace left by the wolves on the Inner Mongolian grassland – the ancient cave of the wolf cub – would be buried in yellow sand.
>
> (524)

Jiang's elegy for lost biological and cultural diversity is, arguably, one of the main reasons why *Wolf Totem* turned into such an international success, given how widely this type of mourning is shared by cultures around the world as biologists warn about the consequences of the sixth mass extinction of species in the history of life on Earth, and as linguists lament the rapid disappearance of many of the world's 6,000 languages.

The books I have discussed here could easily be complemented by other works that have in recent years circulated internationally because of the way in which they interlace ecological crises with cross-cultural encounters. In the encounter with a declining natural world, these texts suggest, cultural differences, often signaled by linguistic misunderstandings or mistranslations, might be the point of departure for a new kind of "eco-cosmopolitanism" (cf. Heise 2008) that mobilizes a wide range of

cultural resources for engagement with environmental problems. In novels such as Montero's and Jiang's, this "fusion of horizons" remains temporary and thus cannot, in the end, hold up ecological degradation, whereas in Ghosh's and Sinha's texts, more lasting coalitions and future prospects emerge at least in outline. However these eco-cosmopolitan scenarios play themselves out, they point to internationally circulated literary texts as a new venue for the articulation of increasingly urgent environmental concerns. They also signal, conversely, that world literature is beginning to include more and more texts with an explicitly ecological or environmentalist dimension. While humans' ecological relationships to their environment are often visible in the background of major works of world literature, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to *King Lear* and *Los pasos perdidos*, these systemic connections have now moved to the forefront in a range of recent fictional texts that have migrated from their places of origin to readers around the world.

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# 42
# MAPPING WORLD LITERATURE

*Theo D'haen*

In 1991 the Belgian comparatist José Lambert, in an article titled "In Quest of Literary World Maps," lamented the poverty of the existing kinds of maps – political, economic, religious, linguistic – when it comes to covering the realities of literature, synchronically as well as diachronically. Because of issues of scale and of the artificiality of the boundaries used, such maps fail to catch both the cross-border flows of immigration, translation, generic and thematic migration and mutation, production and distribution, and the intra-border phenomena of dialectical or minority-language literatures. Yet, he claims, it is such maps, and especially the political maps delineating nation-states, that largely rule the study of literature, leading to all kinds of inclusions, but especially to exclusions. One of Lambert's recurring examples is his own Belgium (but he also mentions Switzerland and Canada), which because of its not having a language of its own is consistently minoritized in discussions of "French" and "Dutch" literatures. It would be better, then, to speak not of "French" literature, but of literature "in French" and literature "in France," the two covering quite different realities, and leading to quite different literary "maps." A world map along these lines, though, still seemed a very far cry in 1991. Since then, of course, at least a number of the phenomena Lambert mentions as "off the map" are being addressed in the kind of research Franco Moretti has undertaken, and which has resulted in his 1998 *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900*, his various articles on world literature, and his 2005 *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (see the chapter on Moretti in this volume).

The view of literature from the nation is one – rather negative – instance of what Djelal Kadir in a number of articles on comparative and world literature has called "worlding" (Kadir 2004, 2006, 2011), in which he takes his initial cue from Edward Said's insistence, in "The World, the Text, and the Critic," on the necessary "worldliness" of literature (Said 1982). Kadir, of course, means that the comparatist talking of world literature should be aware of "where she is coming from" so as to avoid unconsciously reproducing the hegemonic unbalances of power in the world that she professes to correct by furthering the cause of "world" literature over any form of national literature. While this can be argued to also have been Goethe's

point when he first started using the term *Weltliteratur* back in 1827, it certainly was not uppermost in the minds of the earliest scholars trying to effectively "map" world literature. In his *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture* (1911), the earliest such attempt in English, Richard Moulton consciously and deliberately sets out to look at "World Literature from the English Point of View" (Moulton 1911: 53). Moulton freely admits that world literature will be "a different thing to the Englishman and the Japanese" (7). What matters to him is what has fed into the "Literary Pedigree of the English-speaking peoples" (9; see the chapter on Moulton in this volume). Written in that earlier age of globalization ruled by colonialism and imperialism, Moulton's mapping of world literature perfectly illustrates Kadir's "compelling question" also for the present age: "what matters is who carries out its worlding and why," and "the inevitable issue is the locus where the fixed foot of the compass that describes the globalizing circumscription is placed" (Kadir 2004: 2).

Sarah Lawall discusses Moulton at some length in her introduction to *Reading World Literature: Theory, History, Practice*, where she succinctly summarizes such "encompassing" of the world, with reference to Gadamer's paraphrase of Humboldt's view that "*a language-view is a worldview*" (Lawall 1994: 53). Though Gayatri Spivak nowhere mentions Gadamer or Lawall, it is obviously against any such language-view serving as the sole conduit to the world's literatures that Spivak reacts in her *Death of a Discipline* (2003) when she expresses her suspicion of contemporary world literature anthologies in English translation. Aimed initially at the US academic market, but in practice pre-empting that of the entire world, such anthologies serve up a particular map of literature "of" the world and "in" the world; and given the position of the US in the world – economically, politically, militarily, at least until the time of Spivak's writing – this is a hegemonic map. They do so linguistically, presenting, and hence reducing all the world's literatures to, in essence, "in English" literature, and they do so culturally, by "US-style world literature becoming the staple of Comparative Literature in the global South" (Spivak 2003: 39).

Spivak's formulation suggests an American North projecting its views on a "global South," though Martin Puchner has responded that the American anthologies are actually sold within the American market and not in fact marketed abroad (see Puchner in this volume). An earlier and more directly performative "projection" of a Northern view is that of the Flemish cartographer Gerard De Kremer, better known as Mercator. The introduction of the so-called Mercator projection for world maps in 1569 was instrumental for European colonialization and imperialism because it greatly facilitated navigation. It also grossly distorted the proportions of the various parts of the earth, much to the disadvantage of the equatorial (Spivak's "global South") portions of the globe, as more northern areas show up as much larger than they actually are in real terms, thus neatly illustrating their hegemony over the more southern parts of the world. Moreover, the Mercator projection also adopts the habit, customary since Ptolemy, of presenting the world with Europe and Africa in the middle. This puts the Americas to the left and China and Japan to the far right, in effect locating them as peripheral to the "center," viz. Europe.

In many ways, then, map making in the sixteenth century neatly illustrates Immanuel Wallerstein's world system as of approximately 1500, with Western Europe as the center, the rest of Europe and certain parts of the Americas as semi-periphery, and

the rest of the world as periphery. It also signifies a decisive shift from a religious world view formerly dominant in Europe, cartographically embodied in medieval maps traditionally showing Europe, Africa, and Asia with Asia, or the "Orient," at the top, spreading out from Jerusalem as the centre of the world, to a "scientific" world view building on the new knowledge gathered during the Renaissance, and in the process "re-orienting" the world along the North–South axis. As such, Mercator's projection and the map resulting from it can also be seen as an instance of Western modernity turning its "superior" knowledge into power along the lines explored by Michel Foucault and decried by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). The process would repeat itself with the invention of the marine chronometer in the mid-eighteenth century in Britain. This again was a technological innovation in aid of the navigation and trade of what was rapidly becoming the greatest colonial empire on earth. The designation of the meridian passing through Greenwich, where the British Royal Observatory is located, as 0 longitude or the Prime Meridian effectively arrogated to Britain the "center" position on any map as well as the role of originator of "time" via GMT or Greenwich Mean Time, from which all other times on earth are calculated.

When the United States gains its present prominent role in the world, its cartographers, while preserving the Mercator projection's advantaging of North over South, will represent the world with the Americas in the middle and Europe/Africa and Asia/Oceania to either side, thus again accurately mapping centre/periphery relations. Western map making thus quite closely reflects shifts of power in the world. It also parallels similar shifts in thinking about world literature, a shift from Europe, dominant until the middle of the twentieth century, to the United States, dominant since then. It is not for nothing that Pascale Casanova, in her *The World Republic of Letters* (1999) claims Paris to be the "Greenwich Meridian" for world literature (see the chapter on "The Republic of Letters" in this volume). Spivak proposes ending such hegemonic thinking by "up-ending" world literature from the global South up, rather than from the North down. In fact, in world maps, this is exactly what has been going on for the last fifty years or so, with versions of "down-under" maps becoming rather the rage. In such maps, typically, Australia, Indonesia, Southeast Asia and India are in the middle, with the Americas to one side and Europe/Africa to the other, and with Europe ending up a tiny corner. Modern maps in China and Japan have them in the middle. In fact, maps that do not have Europe as the fixed foot of Kadir's compass have existed all along with the Mercator's projection version discussed above; it is just that the latter became dominant along with Europe's rise to global dominance, both reflecting and aiding that rise.

Down-under maps, as long as they keep on using the Mercator projection, merely reverse the axis of dominance. This is a danger that Robert Weninger (2004) has also pointed out with regard to Spivak's privileging of a global South in comparative and world literature studies. A more balanced representation of the world is proposed by the so-called Gall-Peters map of 1967 (named after its "inventors" James Gall and Arno Peters), which corrects for the Mercator projection's disproportionate skewing of the land masses of the various continents, and thus greatly reduces the global North's importance in world-geographical terms. It certainly is not a coincidence that this map was published at a time when the power of the North, at least as far as Europe was concerned, had already waned significantly,with the end of

most of Europe's colonial empires. But what would a Gall-Peters world literature map look like?

Perhaps we can make a beginning by adopting David Damrosch's proposal in his *What is World Literature?* (2003) to sketch the relationships obtaining between two literary works of art, but presumably also between two literatures, not as a circle with one focus, as in Kadir's fixed foot compass circumscription, but as an ellipse, spanning two foci, one in its original location or culture, and one in its new environment. Presumably, the relationships a work or a literature can engage in are multiple, so it can partake in many such ellipses. And these ellipses pertain not only to spatial or synchronic relationships but also to diachronic ones. What we see developing here, then, are networks of partially overlapping ellipses in space and in time, leading to changing constellations over time. Shakespeare, for example, would fit any number of ellipses stretching from England to France (with Voltaire's and Stendhal's interventions on Shakespeare and classical French drama) and to Germany (with A.W. Schlegel's and the Tiecks's translations and studies) in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to India (with Shakespeare prominently present in the colonial high school and university curriculum) in the nineteenth century, and so on.

Following Moretti's example, these relationships could be charted as waves in space and time (Moretti 2005), eventually yielding a historical atlas (Moretti 1998) of Shakespeare's dissemination around the globe. These "Shakespeare" maps would become elements of more comprehensive maps charting the constellated elliptical relationships of English literature to other literatures around the world. In this particular case matters might actually be complicated by the fact that in colonial Indian education Shakespeare was obviously part of "British" Empire culture, so which unit one wants to take as one's starting point for such a mapping exercise could itself become a matter for territorial dispute, especially at a time of devolution in Britain not only in politics but also in culture, as Robert Crawford (2000) has forcefully argued.

Of course, these maps in themselves would tell us nothing about *how* specific works, authors, or literatures would be interpreted, or "read," at any given time in any of the foci of any given ellipse. The nearer or "national" focus may and almost certainly will change over time, but presumably remains steady for any given moment. At the "farther" focus of the ellipse, however, there may be, and again almost certainly will be, considerable variation, as the work, author, or literature in question may serve very different purposes within the possibly very different cultural contexts in which it is received. It remains to be seen, then, whether, and if so at which level of abstraction, sufficient similarities can be detected to also map not only the actual presence of a certain work, author, or literature in a number of foreign cultures but also the interpretation put on them in these cultures, or any commonality of purpose they might serve, for instance to explore how Shakespeare is used as a positive or a negative example to buttress elements already present in the receiving culture or to introduce "newness" there. Gradually, then, and on different levels of abstraction, maps could be construed of a work's, an author's or a literature's "global reach" as well as "impact."

In the previous paragraphs I have relied on European examples, and I have basically construed these maps as one-way affairs, from Shakespeare and from British

literature to elsewhere. Now if there is one thing certain about future world maps of literature, it is that they cannot reflect a uniquely American, Euro-American, Western, or "Northern" point of view of world literature, and that they cannot be unilateral. One of the earliest to speak out on this point was surely the French comparatist and polyglot René Etiemble, who in 1964 launched a forceful plea to "revise" the then customary Eurocentric, or Euro-Americentric, approach to world literature, and to extend it to include all of the world (see the chapter on Etiemble in this volume). A more recent voice, coming from another part of the globe, is that of Eduardo Coutinho, who remarks that until some thirty years ago the practice of comparative literature in Brazil, and by extension in all of Latin America, invariably involved comparison with European or contemporary US American originals, thus contributing to "an accentuation of dependency and the ratification of the state of cultural colonialism which still ruled the continent" (Coutinho 2010, 370).

Coutinho's further remarks, however, underscore that since then the vantage point for comparison in Latin America has shifted to Latin America itself. This implies a different map of world literature, with the formerly "secondary" focus of the ellipse now being privileged, making Latin America the first and hence basic term of reference and comparison. The time of Coutinho's shifting vantage point coincides with the Latin American "boom," and thus with the appearance on the world scene of authors such as Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, José Donoso, and the affirmation of earlier writers such as Alejo Carpentier, Jorge Luis Borges, and Miguel Angel Asturias as projecting a "new" mode of "magical realism" into and upon the world. In such a map it is Europe and North America that become the outliers on the wave emanating from Latin America. Jerome McGann puts it more generally when he remarks, in a discussion of Pascale Casanova's Paris-centred map of world literature, "What if we decide that the center/periphery map has been drawn Under Western Eyes only and that it gives poor service in a truly globalized world? What if – going further still – we were to propose, to theorize, that in such a world, this myth [of literature as an aesthetically autonomous system] resembles less a map than a kind of equilibrium device, a cultural gyroscope for maintaining cultural status quo? It seems to me, looking from my marginal American position, that such thoughts are now common among non-Euro-Americans"(McGann 2008: 651–52).

A Gall-Peters map of world literature, then, presupposes not one hegemonic vantage point but rather a distribution of such points proportionate to their reach, and in conjunction with each other. Unlike the landmasses of the continents, though, the proportions for world literary maps would not remain unchanged forever; as with a historical atlas they would change over time according to the shifting elliptical relationships obtaining between works, authors, and literatures. A representative historical cross-cut might be based, for instance, on Janet Abu-Lughod's mapping of the world before the advent of Wallerstein's world system and hence, as the title of her book suggests, "before European Hegemony." On page 34 of her book, Abu-Lughod (1991) has a map showing the various economic systems operating and interacting with one another in the period 1250–1350. The Americas, Australia, and Oceania are not on this map, as they did not interact with any other part of the world. Presumably, a comparable map could be drawn up for the Americas as a separate

system in the same period, and perhaps the same thing can be done for Australia and/or Oceania. Be that as it may, the "world system A.D. 1250–1350," for Abu-Lughod's purposes, consists of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Within this world system she discerns eight sub-systems. Interestingly, the one sub-system that would emerge after 1500 as the center of Wallerstein's "true" world system, i.e. with all the world tied into one mega-system dominated by one center, is that which is also the only one to interact with only one other sub-system on Abu-Lughod's map. The sub-system centered on Western Europe, stretching from the South of England (producing wool), over Flanders (turning English wool into textiles) and the city fairs of Champagne (trading Flemish wool for Italian luxury products), to the North Italian ports of Genoa and Venice, interacts only with the sub-system centered on the Mediterranean, of which Venice and Genoa are precisely the northernmost points.

The Mediterranean sub-system interacts with three other sub-systems, one stretching from the Black Sea to China via the Silk Road, another spanning the Levant and the Persian Gulf down to the great trading city of Muscat, and a third centered on the Red Sea and comprising all of Egypt down to present-day Ethiopia, Oman, and Aden. The Silk Road sub-system, together with the Mediterranean sub-system, also interacts with the Persian Gulf sub-system and with a sub-system centered on the South China Sea, comprising most of present-day China, all of Southeast Asia, reaching down to present-day Indonesia. This South China Sea sub-system in turn also interacts with another sub-system centered on the Gulf of Bengal and comprising all of China and present-day Sri Lanka. The latter sub-system also interacts with a sub-system centered on the Indian Ocean, and this sub-system finally again also interacts with the Persian Gulf and Red Sea sub-systems.

For the time-span it describes, Abu-Lughod's economic systems world map resembles what Vinay Dharwadker calls "a montage of overlapping maps in motion" (Dharwadker 2001: 3). For the time being, however, I want to concentrate on how Abu-Lughod's economic map actually translates into a literary map, and may be used to undermine, or at least relativize, traditional European or Western notions in this domain.

At least until relatively recently, looking at the development of world literature from a European point of view has involved privileging developments in Europe in pretty much the same way that Coutinho sketched with regard to comparative literature in Latin America until a few decades ago. In other words, even if the import of Arabic elements into European literature, especially via Spain and Sicily, in roughly the period that Abu-Lughod "maps" in her book has long been recognized, these elements have always been looked upon as partial, and incidental to what was in essence "the" march of literature, that is to say, European literature. What counted was not the spread of Arabic love poetry to the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily, but how troubadour poetry from the South of France spread through most of Europe, even if cross-border elements from the Iberian Peninsula love poetry in Arabic went into the making of that troubadour poetry, with mixed Romance vernacular/Arabic poems almost certainly providing the transition. If we want another example along the same lines, let's turn to Boccaccio. The Italian writer is widely credited with having invented the prose story or "novella" in European literature. Boccaccio

obviously drew upon stories from the classics, but he also drew upon stories that were circulating around the Islamic world (Erasmi 1990).

Looking at things now from Abu-Lughod's map, we might conclude that "Europe," that is to say the area covered by Abu-Lughod's first sub-system, was in fact the peripheral receiving part of a much richer Mediterranean sub-system that was predominantly Muslim, and that itself interacted, following the old adage that culture follows trade, with the equally rich sub-systems around the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, transmitting in their turn the riches of the Indian Ocean sub-system. This also suggests interaction between Abu-Lughod's several "worlds before Europe" in the form of touching and occasionally overlapping spheres, with – as is so often the case – the most exciting developments and innovations going on at the intersections, perhaps even often via the kinds of mistranslations and untranslatables that Apter (2008) talks about. From a "world literature" point of view, then, we could say that European literature, instead of setting the pace for any such thing, was a poor relative in the high medieval period, and that the driving forces of world literature were elsewhere. If we wanted to put it in more old-fashioned terms, "influence" those days ran to, and not from, Europe, reaching Europe at the end of a ripple originating elsewhere, from a stronger "world."

The writers among McGann's "non-Euro-Americans" have not been slow to reach the same conclusions. In his 1992 *In An Antique Land*, the Indian-Bengali writer Amitav Ghosh dramatically illustrates the difference "on the map" between West and East, or between some of Abu-Lughod's 1250–1350 sub-systems and the early 1990s "New World Order" system of George W.H. Bush. Ghosh counterpoints a tale about a twelfth-century Jewish merchant in Cairo with his own stay as an anthropologist in Egypt in the early 1980s and his return there at the time of the First Gulf War. The twelfth-century world of Ben Yiju is one that stretches from Morocco to India and where goods, people, and culture freely circulate, and where social and religious tolerance is the rule. The same territory in the late twentieth century is divided up along the colonial legacies of the various European powers that until fairly recently dominated it. Everywhere there are borders, and obstacles to freedom. Whereas the world of Islam dominated the world in the twelfth century, it now is the West, that is to say "America," which was not even "on the map" in Ben Yiju's time, and its predecessor, "Europe," which in the world of Ben Yiju was hardly a player in Abu-Lughod's "world-system."

The Sudanese/British writer Jamal Mahjoub's 1998 *The Carrier* also is set in two different periods. The story of both present-day Hassan, a Danish scholar of Arab origin, and his early seventeenth-century subject of research (and perhaps imagination), a Turkish-Moorish traveller to Denmark called Rashid al-Kenzy, Mahjoub's novel again portrays Europe as the land of the barbarians when compared to the Ottoman Empire, the hated "Turk" in seventeenth-century European parlance, from which al-Kenzy originates. Ghosh's and Mahjoub's novels are perfect illustrations of what Tamim Ansary, in a work with the subtitle "A History of the World through Islamic Eyes," calls "Destiny Disrupted" (Ansary 2009). It is perhaps not an exaggeration to see Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as the scholarly expression of a similar insight, assuming so to speak the "farther" focus in a literary ellipse. What is certain, though, is that Said does not engage in the kind of "disengaged reading" that

Damrosch sees as typical of world literature. Instead, he very much "worlds" his reading of Western Orientalism. At the same time Western readers, now finding themselves at their own "farther" focus from Said, are forced to distance themselves from their own culture's subconsciously assumed views as embodied in that same "orthodox" Orientalism.

Perhaps it is also not superfluous to recall that Orientalism in the guise Said attacks makes its appearance only at the same time that economic hegemony definitely passes from what for André Gunder Frank (1998) is the natural center of the world's economy, that is to say the system linking the giant populations-cum-economies of China and India, to Europe – "definitely," that is, until now, when we are seeing a reversal (Morris 2010). And if one argues that "America" is the center of the world (economic) system now, Paul Kennedy already in 1987 argued that was to be only a short-lived illusion fueled by the coincidence of the US emerging as the sole remaining Western power after World War II. Surely nobody would contest such wisdom after 9/11, the subsequent Anglo-American-led invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and their present-day fall-out, and the economic crisis of 2008. The concurrent rise of "the East," in the first instance China but with India close at its heels, is equally undeniable.

The meteoric rise of China is bound to "re-orient" the world, and hence also world maps, including the map of world literature, within the already foreseeable future – and China is working hard at spreading its language and culture, founding Confucius Institutes dedicated to teaching the Chinese language around the globe along the lines of such earlier Western examples as the British Council, the Alliance Française, or the Goethe, Cervantes, and Camoëns Institutes. The advent of such an important new player offers an alternative vantage point from which to regard both the present and also the past of world literature, anchoring it elsewhere than in the hitherto dominant center. In the longer run it may eclipse the "older" Euro-American system to the point of making it peripheral to the new system. And such a "new"-player may of course actually be a very old one, as is obviously the case with Chinese literature, and the growing confidence of China and its increasing cultural radiation may lead to a renewed emphasis on its own old values, as a counterpart to the West. Even without arriving at such extreme reversals, though, we should not overlook the fact that the "world" of literature looks different even when viewed from less potentially dominant vantage points. In the Yugoslavia of Josip Broz Tito from the 1960s to 1980s, for instance, the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which Tito was one of the leaders, led to a wholly different "alignment" of the world's literatures as researched and taught in Yugoslavia's Institute of World Literature (see Bahun's chapter in this volume).

We could thus construe a whole series of partially overlapping and ever-shifting maps spanning literary systems in continuous evolution, some changing rapidly, others remaining almost static over shorter or longer periods of time, with changes perhaps most often introduced where systems touch or partly overlap with other systems. At times this may lead to one system being more "performant" than another and hence spreading faster and more widely, even hegemonically, as happened with the European novel as of the mid-nineteenth century, or as happened with the European and later US system of literary theory, imposing genre rules and

expectations upon non-Western literatures, implicitly reducing these other literatures to conformity or nonconformity (with all that implies in terms of backwardness, modernity, completeness, and their opposites) with European literature and thus determining what "is" "world literature" for most of the time the term has been in use in the "encompassing" (and hence not in its original Goethean) sense. Each and every one of such "projections," then, should go to make up the maps of world literature at any given moment in time, expanding into a historical atlas of world literature, if we want to gain a fuller view of the field, not tethered to the fixed foot of any hegemonic compass.

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# Part IV

# THE GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSION

# 43
# WORLD LITERATURE AND EUROPEAN LITERATURE

*Roberto M. Dainotto*

What is European literature? Could it not be argued perhaps that the very category of "literature," indicating something distinct from rhetorical decoration and *belles lettres* – representing instead "a certain type of value, i.e. literary aesthetic value" or "a special function that could be performed by some kinds of imaginative writing" (Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 255–56; Poovey 2008: 2) – was "invented" nowhere else than in Europe (Reiss 1992: 70–96)? Or that "It is … in Europe that … the 'fabric of the universal' operates, that is to say the machinery for recognizing a literary work as 'autonomous'" and therefore as a specific human institution (Casanova 2009: 21)? Could it not be argued, in short, that "European literature" is a tautology in terms, and conclude with Goethe that "European, i.e., world literature" (in Birus 2003: 1)?

Certainly, what made sense for Goethe would smack of anachronistic Eurocentrism today – particularly at a time when European cultural markets are flooded with literatures from other continents, let alone other non-literary new media (Moretti 1993: 865). The uncomfortable tautology should not be dismissed, however, without recognizing the difficulties implied in any attempt to relativize the concept of European literature. Recognizing, for instance, the necessity of questioning its centrality – one asserted "in the tradition of earlier European colonizers … [who] claimed universal validity for what they saw as their cultural model" (Youssef 2001: 19) – would not resolve in theory an asymmetry that perdures in practice: European writers, as the Moroccan novelist Abdelfattah Kilito remarks, are judged on the basis of local standards; but who can read an Arab novelist, in the West or even in the East, without comparing her to a European (Kilito 2003: 153)? Could Jorge Luis Borges dismiss European precursors? Or Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto antropofago* do without some "European values" to "cannibalize" (Fernández Retamar 1975: 112)? One could imagine a Korean theory of the novel written against that of Ian Watt, but could one imagine one written without (Dong-il 2003: 177)? The slippage of "world" into "European" literature, in other words, is not a simple matter of accepting or refuting Eurocentric assumptions: it may be ingrained in the very category of literature, as it was constituted in history.

The sacrosanct attempt at "provincializing Europe" (Chakrabarty 2000) faces, moreover, another set of peculiar if inescapable aporias. First, there is the problem of setting the limits that define such a province: "The expression European literature means: the body of works produced within Europe or by citizens of a European nation" (Chevrel 1998: 19); such a definition has the advantage of comprehending migrant literatures written in non-European languages (if produced "within Europe"), and even literatures written in other continents by "citizens"; but then, which nations are European, and which ones are not? If Europe is only, in Paul Valéry's famous dictum, "a small heading of the Asiatic continent … a western appendix of Asia" (Valéry 1948: 24), where does Europe end and Asia begin? Is a Turkish citizen European? The European Union is still debating that point, and one wonders whether literary theory should await a resolution from Brussels.

Second: assuming that a lasting consensus on the limits of Europe could be reached, would European literature then amount to the sum total of all literatures produced within European nations and by its citizens? Franco Moretti would consent to that, but in order for that immense and disparate body of works to be even conceivable, can we even be sure that the notion of "literature" remains the same in all cultural areas of Europe (Chevrel 1998: 23)? Not even the most comprehensive history or anthology would be barely adequate, and new methods of "distant reading" would need to be deployed instead, in order to provide graphs, trees, statistics, atlases, and other bird's-eye views of such a European literature (Moretti 1993, 1997, 2003). For scholars with more traditionalist inclinations, the devil remains in the detail – namely, in the omission of the plural "-s" from "European literature": this is not just a sum, but a unit and a totality.

Ferdinand Brunetière was very specific about this: European literature is not an "arithmetical unity" (Brunetière 1973: 182). "Literarily," he considered "European only that which has enriched the European mind by some element which has remained until then 'national' or 'ethnic'" (Brunetière 1973: 175). Tautological reasoning apart – can we know what the "European mind" is before we even defined "European"? – Brunetière's definition, pronounced at the Congress of Comparative History in 1900 and presenting "European literature" as "only a branch of comparative literature" (Brunetière 1973: 157), inaugurated a new age in which Europe played a dominant role in the emergence of Comparative Literature as a disciplinary formation (Cohen 1989: 5). We will have a chance to come back to this, but not before noticing some further complication. Understood as neither a "homogeneous whole" nor a mere set of "similarities and differences" (van Humbeeck 2008: 105), Brunetière's European literature was not a refutation of national differences, but rather its ultimate, almost Hegelian synthesis. It was:

> organic unity, a unity of variety whose harmony results from the very differentiation of its member parts … the more [European literatures] are "national" the they will be "European"; if European literature is made up only of the diversity of the forms that the demands of the national geniuses have successively or simultaneously imposed on a common matter.
>
> (Brunetière 1973: 182)

Rehearsing already the European Union's theme of e pluribus unum, Brunetière was thus avoiding that a loose "mystical" (Youssef 2001: 6–7) category such as "European mind" would stretch beyond the scholar's control: if it was difficult (especially on the Revue des deux mondes!) to eliminate the role of "the great oriental literatures" (Brunetière 1973: 157) in the enrichment of such spirit, one could nonetheless discard Hebrew, Arab, Persian, or Hindi literatures as fundamentally extraneous to the European history of the rise of the nation-state. European literature, after all, contained in itself enough "difference" not to need the supplementary "Oriental" one: to begin, it encompassed the difference once highlighted by Madame de Staël between Southern and Northern literature, in which the South played the role of an internal Orient (Brunetière 1973: 174).

Beyond the tautology, what, one wonders, is European after all? The nation-state, suggested Brunetière. Yet only a decade after the publication of his essay, nation-states in Europe seemed inclined to pursue mutual destruction rather than any organic synthesis. Maybe Pascale Casanova's observation regarding commercial rivalries should be extended to include military warfare:

> One of the few trans-historical features that constitutes Europe, in effect, one of the only forms of both political and cultural unity – one that is paradoxical but genuine – that makes of Europe a coherent whole is none other than the conflicts and competitions that pitted Europe's national literary spaces against one another in relentless and ongoing rivalry. Starting from this hypothesis, we would then have to postulate that, contrary to commonly accepted political representations, the only possible literary history of Europe would be the story of the rivalries, struggles and power relations between these national literatures.
>
> (Casanova 2009: 13)

Or rather, what could be postulated is that the history of the notion of European literature would be the story of the protracted attempts to synthesize rivalries and struggles into imagined unities. It may be worth recalling, incidentally, that the very idea of Europe as a political, cultural, and moral entity had its origin in a conflict: the proper name, which mythology had assigned until then to the beautiful woman kidnapped by Zeus disguised as a white bull, was evoked by Isocrates at the height of the Persian Wars. The small city-states of Greece, he argued, were too small to confront Darius's powerful army; their only hope was to unite as a new political and military entity – as "Europe" (Chabod 1995: 23; Hay 1957: 1). It took many more wars – the siege of Constantinople (Lewis 1982: 18) and the Crusades (Davies 1996: 258) being the most notable – to solidify the concept of Europe.

Against this background of internal and external conflict, European literature was born:

> It is a well-known fact that the idea of a European literature became widely accepted in Western academic circles since World War II. For it constitutes

> a kind of a substitute, or an alternative to the all too conflicting Western national literatures …
>
> (Youssef 2001: 1)

As a matter of fact, it was already in the quarrelsome climate first of the Wars of Religion, and later the wars of Spanish succession, that an idea of European literature was initially formed (Sinopoli 1999: 12). As Voltaire reminisced, it was in those years that "a Republic of Letters was established imperceptibly in Europe, despite wars and despite religious differences" (Voltaire 1957: 1027). Albeit limited to a small part of Western Europe, the ideal of the Republic – the possibility, that is, of scholarly and literary exchanges, in spite of international conflicts – was instrumental in the establishment of transnational and pan-European cultural aspirations. While publications such as the *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe* (1764) or Jean-Baptiste-René Robinet's *Considérations sur l'état présent de la littérature en Europe* (1762) stressed the link between Europe and literature, by the second half of the eighteenth century, spurred in part by the expulsions of the Jesuits from Portugal, France, and Spain, and their subsequent exile, more transnational approaches to European literatures began to appear that highlighted their common origin and mutual indebtedness: Juan Francisco Masdeu's *Historia crítica de España* (1783) introduced the term "European literature" *expressis verbis* (Marino 1998: 13); and Juan Andrés's *Dell'origine, progressi e stato attuale d'ogni letteratura* (1785) put forward the controversial theory of an Arab origin for European literature (Dainotto 2006, 2007: 87–133).

The Napoleonic Wars following the French Revolution, accompanied by wars of national liberation, prolonged the interest both in Europe as a transnational guarantor of peace (Immanuel Kant's "Perpetual Peace" dates from 1795), and in "European literature" as its cultural equivalent. Requests for a new "European literary science" grew, most notably in journals such as *Europa*, founded by Friedrich Schlegel in 1803, and in the *Archives littéraires de l'Europe* of 1804 (Marino 1998: 14; Chevrel 1998: 20).

Unlike the purely internationalist Europe without borders imagined by the previous generation, unified linguistically through the hegemony of French, post-revolutionary Europe soon acquired the by-now familiar shape of "unity in diversity," and rested instead on the centrality of translation (de Staël). Differences could be those between Southern and Northern literatures – the first ancient and somewhat "Oriental," the second modern and romantic (Domínguez 2006: 425–28) – theorized by Madame de Staël in *De la littérature dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1799), and popularized in a great number of works, including Friedrich Bouterwek's *Geschichte der spanischen Poesie und Beredsamkeit* (1804), Simonde de Sismondi's *De la littérature du midi de l'Europe* (1819) and Edgar Quinet's *La littérature et les institutions comparées de l'Europe méridionale* (1843). Or such differences could be national ones, insisted upon, for instance, in Giuseppe Mazzini's "D'una letteratura europea" (1829), which drew programmatic inspiration from Goethe's concept of world literature:

> Goethe formulated the concept of Weltliteratur in the 1820s, during the heyday of European nationalism, and it was natural for him then to speak of

> world literature as based in the interactions of established national literatures.
>
> (Damrosch 2003: 57)

What gave "European" unity to national, linguistic, and geo-cultural differences was either the common secular aspiration to national self-determination, or the shared religious faith in Christianity. Overlooking the history of Islam and Judaism in Europe can not have been easy. Yet:

> At the dawn of the nineteenth century, within the space of a very few years, four major texts appeared that idealized the Middle Ages as a heavenly period of unity in Christendom, in close connection with an imagined "statehood" and a repositioning of the States's cultural heritage: Chateaubriand's *La genie du christianisme* (1800); August Wilhelm Schlegels's *Geschichte der romantischen Literatur* (1802); Tieck's *Vorrede zu den Minneliedern aus dem Schwäbischen Zeitalter* (1803); and Novalis's *Die Christenheit oder Europe*.
>
> (Meltzer 2009: 44)

All this translated quickly into specific literary studies: Henri Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the 15th, 16th and 17th Centuries* (1839) is typical of an epochal tendency to privilege the rise of Christianity as the moment of the birth of "the literature of Europe" (rigorously in the singular). Sucha literature would at one and the same time preserve Greco-Roman classical culture (most notably with Latin remaining the official language of the Church until at least the sixteenth century), and distinguish itself from it by being modern.

It has been argued that such a desire to declare a European cultural unity in the midst of wars and religious schisms was what slowly led to the institution of comparative literature (Bemong et al. 2008: 9):

> The new discipline, developed in the universities of Western Europe by the end of the Nineteenth Century, was understood … particularly in France and Germany as a comparative history of European literatures, and often named as precursors [the studies of European cultural unity by] … de Staël and the Schlegel brothers …
>
> (Sinopoli 1999: 38)

In this sense, the centrality of Europe is no simple Eurocentric bias, but a more problematic inscription in the very history and genesis of comparativism itself: comparative literature was – certainly among other things – the attempt to answer crises and conflicts that concerned (with disregard for colonial wars) Europe specifically.

This holds true also in the case of the resurgence of comparative literature in the United States in the immediate post-World War II period:

> The impulse animating postwar American comparative literature was still recognizably the European dream of cosmopolitanism that had migrated

> across the Atlantic in order to come to fruition in that more welcoming climate. In this respect, it is useful to remember that many of the early sponsors of American comparatism were displaced Europeans – we can think of such giants as Erich Auerbach, Leo Spitzer, Rene Wellek, and … Werner Friederich …
>
> (Bemong et al. 2008: 9)

Almost as if he had foreseen all this, Paul Valéry had written on the eve of World War II:

> Whenever my thoughts become too gloomy and whenever I despair of Europe, I can restore some degree of hope only by thinking of the New World. Into the two Americas, Europe has sent its messages, the communicable creations of its mind, all the most positive things it has discovered, and, in short, all that was least liable to deterioration through transportation and remoteness from prevailing conditions. It was truly a form of "natural selection" that took place and which extracted from the European mind its products of universal value, while all its more conventional and too historical elements remained in the Old World.
>
> (Valéry 1948: 84)

With an echo of Brunetière, but with more faith in exile than in the nation-state, Valéry then saw the "universal" values of European literature migrating into the New World.

Certainly, in Europe too there were those intent on salvaging a common European matrix from the debris of two world wars: Ortega y Gasset, for instance, insisted in a lecture given in post-war Berlin – delivered in Latin, as "De Europa meditatio quaedam" – that European literature, culture, and society "predate the existence of the European nation state," and that the idea of a cultural "unity of Europe is not a fantasy" (Fuentes 2004: 119; Lévêque 2001: 284). In Istanbul (whether it was Europe or not, he taught "European Philology" there [Angelov 2008: 65])Erich Auerbach conceived his "investigation into the literary representation of reality in European culture" (Auerbach 1974: 23) as if European literature was one whole. And from all-too-European Mitteleuropa, Ernst Curtius insisted:

> The first World War had made the crisis of European culture obvious … Europe is dismembered into geographical fragments … Europeanization of the historical picture has today become a political necessity, and not only for Germany … The "Europeanization of the historical picture" which is to be promoted today must also be applied to literature. If Europe is an entity which participates in two cultures the Antique-Mediterreanean and the Modem-Western, this is also true of its literature.
>
> (Curtius 1990: 4–9)

The two Europes of de Staël and Brunetière, North and South, Ancient and Modern, were not for him antithesis and separation, but essential unity. Curtius's

"Europe" was a wholesome Latin-Christian space to reconstruct; national cultures were only variations on a set of commonplaces – *puer senex*, woman-angel – that could be found in all times and spaces of a single European literature.

As soon as the German borders reopened in 1947, American-born Thomas Stearns Eliot, by then a European himself, hurried to visit no less a person than his friend Curtius in Bonn. What the two must have discussed is not known, but it is likely that at the core of friendly discussions was Curtius's idea of a fundamental unity of European culture, to be rebuilt after the war. Eliot devoted his talk "The Unity of European Culture," broadcast in Germany between July and October 1953 by the BBC's foreign service as part of de-Nazification programs, to the theme of "variety in unity" (Eliot 1977: 197). After reminiscing about the good times – of *The Criterion* between 1922 and 1936, when " there existed an international fraternity of men of letters, within Europe: a bond which did not replace, but was perfectly compatible with, national loyalties, religious loyalties, and differences of political philosophy" (Eliot 1977: 195); and after having briefly alluded to the sad ending of this new modernist Republic of Letters – Eliot soon came to the main point of his speech. This was Curtius's (and before that, Brunetière's) idea that "there is a common element in European culture, an interrelated history of thought and feeling and behaviour, an interchange of arts and of ideas" (Eliot 1977: 197). Yet while Eliot only echoed Curtius in maintaining that the element "which we share in common … is … the literature of Rome" (Eliot 1977: 190), he was more explicit than his friend in evoking the Romantic theme of Chateaubriand and Novalis:

> I am talking about the common tradition of Christianity which has made Europe what it is, and about the common cultural elements which this common Christianity has brought with it … I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian Faith. And I am convinced of that, not merely because I am a Christian myself, but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes. Then you must start painfully again, and you cannot put on a new culture ready made. You must wait for the grass to grow to feed the sheep to give the wool out of which your new coat will be made. You must pass through many centuries of barbarism. … The Western World has its unity in this heritage, in Christianity and in the ancient civilisations of Greece, Rome and Israel, from which, owing to two thousand years of Christianity, we trace our descent.
>
> ( Eliot 1977: 200)

It was not in Europe, however, that the most authoritative pronouncement regarding the unity of European literature were made. Perhaps, Curtius had been right:

> Such a "science of European literature" has no place in the pigeonholes of our [European] universities and can have none. Academic organization of philological and literary studies corresponds to the intellectual picture in 1850. Seen from 1950, that picture is as obsolete as the railroads of 1850! We have modernized the railroads, but not our system of transmitting

> tradition. How that would have to be done cannot be discussed here. But one thing may be said: Without a modernized study of European literature there can be no cultivation of the European tradition.
>
> (Curtius 1990: 16)

Auerbach had moved to Penn State in 1947, joining his fellow German Leo Spitzer (Johns Hopkins) and Austrian René Wellek (University of Iowa) in the United States. In 1949, while Europe was taking its first eager step towards economic integration with its Council, it was from the United States that Wellek posed the question of "European literature" yet again, with the weight and authority of a book that will have formed more than one generation of literary scholars. Insisting on the necessity of abandoning "national" studies of literature, and of "identifying 'comparative literature' with the study of literature in its totality, with 'world-literature,' with 'general' or 'universal' literature" (Wellek and Warren 1956: 37), he wrote in *Theory of Literature*:

> Happily, in recent years there are many signs which augur a return to the ambition of general literary historiography. Ernst Robert Curtius' *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948), which traces commonplaces through the totality of Western tradition with stupendous erudition, and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946), a history of realism from Homer to Joyce based on sensitive stylistic analyses of individual passages, are achievements of scholarship which ignore the established nationalisms and convincingly demonstrate the unity of Western civilization, the vitality of the heritage of classical antiquity and medieval Christianity. Literary history as a synthesis, literary history on a supernational scale, will have to be written again.... Literature is one, as art and humanity are one ...
>
> (Wellek and Warren 1956: 38–39)

The slippage of "comparative," "world," "general," and "universal" not even into "Europe," but into "Western Europe," should not, at this point, come as a surprise: the discourse on the unity of European literature, like that very European literature described by Curtius, is, after all, a series of commonplaces – medieval Christianity, the interchange of national traditions, the Greco-Roman heritage – that repeat through the totality of Western tradition in the attempt to invent a unity in the face of discord. To such commonplaces, we may now add another one. I am alluding to the commonplace of Eurocentrism, certainly applicable to Wellek's own attempt to collapse the United States, South America – let alone, *excusatio non petita*, "Oriental" literatures too – into the universal map of "Western European literatures":

> In total, much evidence for the close unity, especially of the Western European literatures, has been accumulated ... without minimizing the importance of Oriental influence, especially that of the Bible, one must recognize a close unity which includes all Europe, Russia, the United States, and the South American literatures.
>
> (Wellek and Warren 1956: 36–38)

I wrote that European literature is the attempt to "invent" a unity. I do not mean this in any negative way – especially if the alternative is the state of warfare which the idea of "European literature," from the Republic of Letters to Curtius and Wellek, meant to oppose. After all, other communities have been successfully "invented," and literature is said to have had a central role in it. Whereas national "invented communities" (Anderson 1983), however, were established through the institutionalization of state-sponsored departments, curricula, prizes, and schoolbooks, nothing comparable has ever happened in the case of the European Community. For the recent Union, literature has remained largely marginal if not ignored, with the exception, perhaps, of a peculiar publication of the Council of Europe in which European writers offer a more or less engrossing reflection on the theme of bridges in an attempt – allegorical at that – to bridge cultural differences (Council of Europe 1999)!

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# 44
# WORLD LITERATURE AND LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE

*Djelal Kadir*

The American New World, the *Latin* American New World known as *Mundus Novus*, in particular, gives the terms "world" and "literature" an epistemic jolt, what we might call "a cosmic shove through the window." The disruptive nature of that experience, starting one early October morning in 1492, offers a new world perspective in recompense. "Perspective," as the twentieth-century art historian Erwin Panosfky etymologized it, literally means "seeing through": "We are meant to believe we are looking through a window into a space. The material surface upon which the individual figures or objects are drawn or painted or carved is thus negated, and instead reinterpreted as a mere 'picture plane'" (Panofsky 1927: 27). American history, Latin or otherwise, perennially forces us to look back through this unsettling image and its "picture plane." World literature, in fact, is another name for the vicissitudes of that "picture plane" in the New World, and we shall be taking yet another look through the window that seeks to frame it.

In the meantime, we might recall that the third characteristic of world literature in the ternary definition accorded it by David Damrosch, after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (q.v., the essay by Pizer in this volume), is, not surprisingly, window-bound: "World literature has often been seen in one or more of three ways: as an established body of *classics*, as an evolving canon of *masterpieces*, or as a multiple *windows on the world*" (Damrosch 2003: 15). Damrosch's choice for exemplifying this "*windows on the world*" definition is the Virgilian epic, the *Aeneid*, a foundational classic of empire that bulged in the saddlebags of more than one conquistador in what the European founders of a transatlantic empire conveniently called the "New World." Partly coincidental, Damrosch's illustrative choice is not insignificant for the fate of world literature in this New World. Damrosch refers to the *Aeneid* as "a window on the world of imperial Rome; though it is set before Rome's founding and treats legendary materials, in its underworld scenes and epic similes it opens out with unconcealed directness toward Virgil's contemporary world" (Damrosch 2003: 15–16). Indeed, lest we forget, Virgil was commissioned by Augustus Caesar to

produce an epic tale for his and Augustus's "contemporary world." And while it was to tell the story of Rome's legendary/mythological founding, the telltale signs of the genesis of the tale as commissioned piece work endure, meaningfully, despite the fact that those signs are designed to recede into transparency, as in the disappearing act of a world perspective, where, according to Panosfsky, the "material surface upon which the individual figures or objects are drawn or painted or carved is thus negated, and instead reinterpreted as a mere 'picture plane.'"

The example offered by Damrosch's fenestrate definition would seem to hold, then, as does the nature of the imperial analogue. But the disappearing act of the materiality and material surfaces of the world through the window, their defenestration, as much in Rome as in the Latin American New World, becomes complicated by worldly and other-worldly entailments, which adhere to those historical objects as pertinacious telltale signs much as they did in Virgil's and Augustus's own Rome, though that epic narrative reached well beyond the Republican Rome of their time. These indelible signs endure as telling evidence of human experience, literary and otherwise. Such obdurate materiality in the American New World proves unsettling not only for the world as object of conquest. It proves no less unsettling for the would-be conquerors and their imperial designs on the world, and certainly proves just as disruptive to the narrative and representational constructs devised for their historical, scientific, and literary depiction. Bedeviled in the process is the transparency of those "windows on the world," and the resultant palimpsests of historical and aggregate aesthetic densities emerge as the measure of a world literature.

This is the world literature that issues from the unveiling of a thitherto hidden cosmos, playfully troped as "America" in 1507 by the philologically clever cartographer Martin Waldseemüler and his fellow monks at Saint Die in the Vosges Mountains on the Alsatian frontier between France and Germany (Kadir 1992: ch. 4). While that world may have lain beyond the purview of Europe's windows till that moment in October 1492, after the unveiling and bringing of that picture plane into view as a New World, the windows, it was discovered, suddenly suffered the fate against which the vodka-sodden exhortation of the Russian toast admonishes the celebrants – "may your windows not turn into mirrors!" As in most self-induced reveries, then, the result of that complication was enchantment through which a spectrally engendered literature world yields its mirror image as inevitable world literature. It is thus that, as world and as world literature, Latin America enters the language of a historical moment that corresponds to Europe's hieroglyphic Renaissance, Spain's Golden Age, and the seventeenth century's baroque. This cultural history is mediated by the peculiarities of a New World that indeed reflects back as mirror. The signal terms of that echo are *encanto* and *desengaño*, a labyrinth of *enchantment* and *disenchantment* whose intricate paths are dramatically woven through the spectral worlds of such figures as Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Calderón de la Barca, Luis de Góngora, and Francisco de Quevedo. In certain cases, such as that of Cervantes, the spectral ricochet is literal, with his most signal bequest to world literature, the *Don Quijote* (1605; sequel 1615), having resulted, according to some, from the denial of Cervantes' petition at the end of the sixteenth century to seek his fortune in the New World. And Cervantes' eponymous hero would famously quip,

in echo of Francisco de Quevedo, "Nada me desengaña. El mundo me ha hechizado. (Nothing disillusions me. The world has bewitched me)" (Astrana Marín 1948–58; Leonard 1940). Literature, Cervantine or otherwise, thus, becomes "world literature" in a powerful sense some three centuries before Goethe's or Marx's nineteenth-century utopian expectations for such a hoped-for historical development in their own respective worlds.

The complexities of self-discovery in historic exposure of/to other worlds in the case of the transatlantic hemisphere point to two concomitants in our critical and historical understanding of "world literature," to wit, the copula of empire and world. Damrosch's example of Rome's imperial epic for a definition of world literature, then, may be more than a mere coincidence, after all. Our contemporary resurrection of "world" as defining concept of literature at the beginning of the twenty-first century may well speak to the imperial nature of our own age no less than the *Mundus Novus* of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe served as window to/on empire in what is often called the first era of globalization. Whether material symptom or illocutionary collusion, in other words, our present "world literature" may well be integral to the current imperial age. And the concurrent discourses of "world-systems theory" (Apter 2009), "planetarity" (Spivak 2003), and "world republic of letters" (Casanova 2004; Prendergast 2004) may well be part of the epoch's empire syndrome and its globalization as a "One World" and a "New World Order." Likewise, it may not be fortuitous that Goethe's own enchantment with the lexis *Weltliteratur* is contemporaneous with the birth of the concept of *Weltmarkt* (Berman, 1984: 90; Casanova 2004: 14). The historical simultaneity of world literature and world markets at the time of Goethe's pronouncements anticipates literature's worlding and the global integration of cultural and economic life in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels two decades later. The simultaneity of spirit and matter at the inception of the American New World offers a powerful precedent in this regard, and the emblematic embodiment of each of these dualities is none other than the Genoese "discoverer" of the New World, Christopher Columbus, and his friend and fellow navigator after whom the New World is named, the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci. Between them, the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of the next world found their geographical correlative in the transoceanic littoral they both navigated in near simultaneity. Text-based and graphically conceived, the New World of Columbus had its foundations in the cosmogonies of "the New World and the New Earth" of the biblical Book of Revelations (Kadir 1992). The textual antecedents of Vespucci's *Mundus Novus* originated in the mathematical and astronomical texts of such figures as Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli, whose native Florence at the end of the fifteenth century was already astir with Europe's incipient Renaissance.

> Columbus based some of his fanciful prophecies on lyrical passages in the Bible; Vespucci used some of the most beautiful of Dante's verses to help him describe the southern stars in his letters, and his paragraphs on nature in Brazil are reminiscent of the stanzas Politian dedicated to Simonetta Vespucci, Botticelli's model who inspired him to paint Primavera. [ … Vespucci] followed a school of literature running from Boccaccio's *Decameron* to Lorenzo

> the Magnificent's carnival songs as, in the letters to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, he described the pleasures offered by Indian women at the Yucatan "court," and the glory of sleeping in hammocks. Columbus launched the fable of the Amazon women, which captured the imagination of the Conquistadors, already stimulated by books of chivalry. [ … ] Columbus was a mystic; Vespucci a Florentine. In the final analysis, this duality of the Medieval and the Renaissance man, which is like the great dialogue in the Spanish theater at the beginning of the sixteenth century, constitutes the first chapter in the contradictions surrounding the birth of the New World's culture. Spain herself was engaged in a struggle between the new spirit from Italy and the old spirit of Castille. One of the most famous of the Conquistadors, Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, was inspired to undertake the conquest of El Dorado, but he whiled away the night watches in the encampment in the marshes and jungles covering the valley of the Magdalena River by discussing poetry and defending the ottava rima of Spain's traditional ballads against the hendecasyllable verse of Petrarch's sonnets, which either the priest or his captains championed.
>
> (Arciniegas 1967: 70–71)

Called the Knight of El Dorado, the object of Jiménez de Quesada's quest was not to be attained until 1759, when Voltaire's Candide found, and abandoned with ironic *ennui*, El Dorado's storied realm in the kingdom of literature. Quesada (1500–79) himself was accorded a fittingly fabulous second life in the world of world literature. A quixotic figure even before *Don Quijote* was written, Cervantes identifies the prototype for his hero as a gentleman by the surname of Quijano, or Quijada, or Quesada. Having thus entered the world of literature, the Conquistador and founder of Santa Fe de Bogotá, the capital of today's Colombia, not only would migrate into world literature, he also entered the textual narrative of world history when a number of his letters from the New World found their way into the piratical hands of Sir Walter Raleigh. As he languished in the Tower of London at the time, Raleigh used those letters when instructed by the English King James I to write what became his *History of the World* (1614). The case of Jiménez de Quesada, as with Columbus and Vespucci before him, is yet another instance of the inalienability of the literary and the historical, with "world," in this case the American New World, as their shared slippery ground and ambiguous common qualifier.

The textualized reality of the New World, then, whether as history or as literature, as chronicle or as epistolary portrait, takes on an intricate worldliness, much like Panofsky's "perspective" and its "picture plane." The process begins with Columbus's 1492 captain's log – the "Diary" of his first voyage – and the disjunction between the narrative of its "picture plane" and the actual reality of the New World on which it opened Europe's window. Eight years later, the Brazilian counterpart of that foundational text, Pêro Vaz de Caminha's "Carta de achamento," or "letter of finding," likewise takes up the New World by looking through it, inevitably turning it into a mirror in the process. Not unlike other cosmogonies, then, the birth of the New World is also a mirage at conception and at its moment of passage into the view of Europe's prospect. Caminha was the official chronicler of Pêro Álvares

Cabral, whose Portuguese expedition to India strayed across the Atlantic onto Brazilian shores on 22 April 1500. Caminha wrote and dated his "Carta" on 1 May 1500. Like Columbus's "discovery," Caminha's is also accidental, an attempt to reach the East only to end up west of everything, including the known world. And, as the fates would have it, having been called the "letter of the finding," the "Carta" itself becomes lost in the archival labyrinth for over three hundred years. It would not see publication until 1817. The textual record – the "picture plane" – in Caminha's "Carta" was no less inventively disjunctive with the actual reality of its "findings" than were Columbus's unalloyed projections on the geography and on the utterances of the indigenous people he encountered. The difference between the two "discoverers" is that Caminha demonstrates a self-awareness of the determinacy of his own wishful thinking, indicating at one point that the natives, whose language he did not know, might have been telling him something other than what he wishfully understood them to be saying. Columbus's ideological and pragmatic preconceptions endure no such self-conscious mitigation, though he was no less ignorant of the natives' language than Caminha. Perhaps, as fortune's compensatory gesture for his unshakable convictions, the hazardous peripeties of Columbus's Diary of the first voyage are even more acutely aleatory than the fate of Caminha's "Carta." Columbus's manuscript survived the storm that nearly wrecked his returning ships, by virtue of having been put into a barrel and thrown overboard. America's foundational text reached European shores as jetsam, with its narrative content reaching us only as hearsay through the paraphrase of Columbus's daily notations by his contemporary Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, who had temporary access to a copy of that primal text.

American literature, Latin or otherwise, has a peculiar and agonic worldliness that defines it as world literature, starting with the fortuities of these primal scenes. And, hyperbolic as it invariably proves to be, there is more than one such scene in America, as history attests. The American "picture plane," in Panofsky's and Damrosch's fenestrate terms with which we began, emerges as a contested arena where writing turns reality into textuality and worldly actuality perennially chastens its redactors and their ledgers, imaginative and otherwise. This doubly disruptive nature (in the triple sense of birth, environment, and characteristics) of America's production as geography and as culture inevitably yields a literature that is, perforce, world literature. In the compounded, and perpetually self-compounding, historical hazards of this process, writing on and in America is in large measure an attempt to compensate for these worldly and aesthetic misprisions and their worldly risks. Writing, we might say, is an endeavor to optimize those haphazard possibilities (Kadir 1986). Literature, then, functions as a mode of historical hedging, in the multiple sense of the verb "to hedge," a process that begins with the graphic archive of the indigenous cultures even before their European encounter, and certainly a strategy that is integral to the primal texts of Columbus and Caminha. Both had a vested interest in casting the world they found in a light that justified the venture capital of their enterprise and its royal patronage, certainly in the case of Columbus, who may have died holding the conviction that he had reached the Far East; and in Caminha's case, he was hard pressed to cast his chronicle in a way that put the best light on a wayward transatlantic landing, where what was originally intended was a sailing that

rounded the African Cape and crossed the Indian Ocean. This world of peripety, where a found world is forged as something other than it is, has yielded a typological category, a genre, in literary terms, that the Brazilians have called *ufanismo* – a paradisiacal exaltation of the geography and its human and material contents. Thomas More would base his 1516 treatise, *Utopia*, on this edenic hedging. Bedeviled by an indomitable reality, however, the literature that emerges as world literature from this world is perforce a *heterotopia* – an impure hybrid that reflects compounded "mistakes" and "misgivings," one that reflects as well the miscegenated humanity of the New World where Amerindian, European, African, and Asian races and cultures converge and intermingle.

Grounded on such unmistakable volatility, the institutional foundations of the New World – axiological, epistemic, political, literary – would systemically assimilate their originary precariousness as integral part of their worldly (and otherworldly) constitution. Inexorably worldly, the world literature of the New World seeks either to forge an assuasive or normative corrective to the hazards of its history, or to dramatize the mercurial nature of its genesis. In its inevitable worldliness, then, American literature, as American, Latin, or anterior to the European encounter, can be read as the perennial narrative of a volatile existential condition. We witness this not only in the founding texts of Columbus and Caminha; we see it also in the indigenous archive and, most overtly, in the native peoples' response to a historical condition of cosmic insecurity exacerbated by invasion, conquest, and colonization. Exemplary in this regard are the Mesoamerican *in xochitl in cuicatl* ("flowers and birdsongs"), as the Aztecs called poetry, particularly the poems of the *Cantares mexicanos* ("Songs of the Mexicans"), the *Romances de los señores de la Nueva España* ("Ballads of the Lords of New Spain"), and, in the Andean region, the ancient Incaic Tahuantinsuyu, the compositions of the *quillcacamayoc*, the "composers" of the *quipus*, the knotted polysemic texts of color-coded strings, whose Nahuatl counterpart is the iconic script of *tlacuilolli* (that which is produced by the painter scribe – the *tlacuilo*) and compiled into screenfold books. The surviving compositions of these elaborately textual traditions are elegiac, more often grieving for a world irretrievably lost. Also surviving in the midst of lamentation is a remarkably conscious self-referring in which a lost world attains immortality through meta-textual perseverance. Thus, a vanished world lives on through a deliberate transformation of a life world into world literature – cosmogony turned into graphic "textogony." The poetic personae that articulate that metamorphosis give every indication of being fully aware of the historical contexts and compositional processes that inexorably lead to this transformation, as, for example, the Aztec poet who addresses the poets about composing poems, even while he himself is engaged in the process of transforming the world into poetry through his own composition: "Make your beginning, / you who sing. / May you beat again / your flowered drum [ … ] / And these our songs, / these our flowers. / They are our shrouds. / So be happy: / woven into them / is the eagle, the jaguar: / we will go with them / there where it is all the same" ("Songs of the Aztec Nobility": 1754). Complex products of a historical necessity and its cataclysmic inevitabilities, the poetic elegies that sing a vanishing world into an abiding "world literature" have their origins in these long traditions that antedate the European conquest (Brotherston 1992: 9–127).

Latin American literature, then, has its genesis in a series of defining worldly matrices – the indigenous cosmogonies, the other-worldly New World of Christian eschatology, the propagandistic discourse in praise of worldly materiality of free real estate, minerals, and other earthly goods coveted by the conquerors and the venture capitalists of their time that underwrote the hemisphere's invasion and colonization. Framed by these multiple senses of "world," Latin American literature could not have been anything other than world literature. The perspectival windows that open upon its "picture plane" might vary, but the variant constructions of America as world forged in the fire of religious orthodoxies, political ideologies, or covetous materialism are consistent in their constructed nature. However, this is a constructedness that never manages to fully circumscribe and contain the reality that ultimately bedevils the most intricate human designs. That reality spills out of the frames of any "picture plane," giving the American hemisphere its most signal characteristic as an "incontinent continent" (Kadir 1986: ch. 1, *et passim*). The instrumentality of language – graphic, poetic, philosophical, apocalyptic, historiographic, scientific, military, mercantile – is invariably compromised, even as it seeks to frame the worldliness of the American New World. The reality of this world, as the Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez noted in his 1982 Nobel lecture, outruns the most elaborate intentions of the human imagination and its rationality. American reality is more fantastic than its authors' wildest fictions, and, no matter how ingenious the poetic and epistemological frames that seek to circumscribe it into landscape, America's protean reality proves indomitable.

Thus, the "wonders of the New World" which in the sixteenth century turned conquistadors such as Jiménez de Quesada into prototypes of quixotic figures and gave Cervantes the model for the hero of his novel, in the seventeenth century those wonders would emerge as more wondrous still, subsuming the phenomenal epistemologies by which Europe sought to define such marvels. Thus the romances of chivalry that inspired the conquistadors would be swallowed into such outsized works of world literature as Bernardo de Balbuena's twenty-four volume *Bernardo, o la victoria de Roncesvalles* (1624), through which the Mexican author sought to define himself as a New World Ariosto, as the twentieth-century Dominican essayist and polymath Pedro Henríquez Ureña points out. And the emergent new science of Descartes and his *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences* (1637) would see its fifth chapter subsumed into Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's scientific poem *Primero sueño* (1692; "First Dream"), as the Cuban poet José Lezama Lima reminds us in his reading and elaborate re-enactments of the Hieronimyte nun's legacy in the twentieth century. It is the insatiable curiosity and poetic ambition of Sor Juana's friend and fellow-Mexican scientist and mathematician Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora (*Manifiesto filosófico contra los cometas*, 1681) that embraces the Cartesian method and projects it into the astronomical reveries of the next century, thereby anticipating the aesthetic, scientific, and political revolutions of eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Sigüenza y Góngora's *Los infortunios de Alonzo Ramírez* (1690) bridges the seventeenth-century's picaresque narrative to the Enlightenment's colonialist reprise of the genre in Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* (1719) and points to the picaresque's ironic recasting as parodic *bildungsroman* by Voltaire in *Candide ou*

*L'Optimism, Traduit de l'Allemand de Mr. Le Docteur Ralph* (1759). Defoe's novels, no less than Voltaire's, could be called American, certainly by narrative setting (*Robinson Crusoe* is set on the Caribbean island of Tobago; more than half of *Candide*'s and its hero's philosophical peripeties course through Latin America). These works set up America, yet again, as a mirror of Europe's "picture plane" and its worlding epistemologies, with "worlding" continuing to function as gerund of a transitive verb, a (re-)productive grammatical voice of "to world" in "world literature" (Kadir 2004). Recent cultural historians such as Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra (2001) document the arc of this epistemological worlding of the New World from the sixteenth-century natural histories of the initial conquest through the conjectural histories of the eighteenth-century colonial era. The Americas' literatures reflect back, even as they subsume these scientific projects into a spectral archive whose textuality is, perforce, a world literature, and inevitably so, because world and literature become concomitants in a coeval historical process that renders world and literature coterminous phenomena in perennial metamorphoses. These transformations can be ironic (often self-ironic) or cosmogonic (world-engendering), or simultaneously both, as demonstrated by the early twentieth-century cannibalistic project of Brazilian Modernismo (Oswald de Andrade 1928), and enacted as self-inventive narrative worlds by the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges (1940) and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes (1975).

A basic matrix for the phenomenon and concept of "world literature" is the mutual implication of world and literature as continuous transformative process. This mutual implication is particularly acute in the case of America, of Latin America especially, because the perennial symptoms emanating from this matrix indicate that while the world of this hemisphere is possessed of a literature, this literature is no less under the spell and possession of a world that contagions and intensifies the most inventive endeavors of human rationality and imagination. Hence, the inevitability of world literature as concomitant of the American New World, where the modifiers "American" and "New" signal, simultaneously, the intermediation of world and literature in their mutual transformation. Time and again, the literary traditions that emanate from the American New World interject a radical permutation in the fenestrate definition of "world literature" that we derive from Panofsky and are offered by Damrosch. In the case of Panofsky's window, through which the materiality of "individual figures or objects are drawn or painted or carved is thus negated, and instead reinterpreted as a mere 'picture plane,'" in Latin America the act of negation of the figured materiality is itself negated. The result is not a displacement and substitution of a plane (geographic, human, historical) by a picture, but the exacerbation of the reality of both plane and picture through the superposition of cumulative accretions. That palimpsest goes by any number of names in the self-diagnoses of the resultant world literature – natural wonder, baroque, the marvelous real, magical realism. And, as for the definition of world literature as "windows on the world," in the case of Latin America those windows are the world just as much as they are the prospect called literature that is formed and perpetually transformed by that world for its viewing. Borges calls those nested frames or abyssed narratives "labyrinths," García Márquez calls them American reality. In either case, these diagnostic characterizations form yet another layer of Latin America's mercurial palimpsest whose name is, perforce, world literature.

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# 45
# WORLD LITERATURE AND US AMERICAN LITERATURE

*Lawrence Buell*

Especially if "world literature" is understood in the most exalted sense as "an evolving canon of established masterpieces" (Damrosch 2003: 15), the history of US literature as world literature looks strikingly brief and fraught.

## US literature's international emergence encapsulated

Although well before 1850 such early national writers as Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper were read and translated throughout Europe and beyond, world recognition of the US as a generator of a corpus of distinguished literature did not come until much later. Only during the second quarter of the twentieth century did the nation's literati free themselves of the vestiges of postcolonial legitimation anxiety and national literature attain its present standing as comparable in quality to the great European and Asian literatures.

A crude but telling barometer is the history of the Nobel Prize for literature. No American won it before 1930, but no less than eight since then (three in the 1930s alone), more than any other country during the same span, even if one reassigns T.S. Eliot to the UK. To be sure, the conferral of literary awards for merit is a notoriously fractious and politicized affair and a number of the Swedish Academy's choices were controversial at the time and/or seem dubious in retrospect: Sinclair Lewis (1930), Eugene O'Neill (1936), Pearl Buck (1938), T.S. Eliot (1948), William Faulkner (1950), Ernest Hemingway (1954), John Steinbeck (1962), Saul Bellow (1976), Toni Morrison (1993). Nonetheless, the fact remains that for the past eighty years the world's most illustrious literary "economy of prestige" (James English's elegant phrase) has accepted US writing into the high canon of world literature. Probably by no coincidence, although no close link can be proven, that ascendancy coincided with the crystallization of American literature as a recognized academic subfield.

This might seem one of those success stories stereotypically thought to define the American experience. Ironically, however, for no more than a brief period in the mid-twentieth century did Americanists take anything like unalloyed satisfaction in the rise of national literature to literary world power status. Indeed this phrase is likely to provoke embarrassment if not revulsion among today's Americanists on at least two counts. First and especially, its dominationist overtones conjure up the image of American hubris toward the rest of the world, especially since World War II but with roots stretching back to early colonial-era identification with the British imperial project. Then too, the holistic notion of "a" unitary national literary scene or imprint or tradition seems long since passé. And the realization that US *popular* fiction and Hollywood cinema have conquered the world much more decisively than its "serious" literature has, and that by dint of "America's economic dominance" (Casanova 2004: 179), is more apt to produce chagrin than rejoicing. At all events, when twenty-first century Americanists specializing in writers associated with what is now the territorial US are asked to parse "American Literature and World Literature," they are likely to prefer to stress national writing's constitution from multiple diasporic and indigenous cultural strands and transnational feedback loops as against its literary influence in the world at large, and to take pains as I now do to put "American" in virtual quotation marks so as to make plain, as their predecessors did not, the insouciance of using "US" as a synonym for "American" without acknowledging the different senses of "America" between hemispheric north and south and the non-identity of political borders and the contours of cultural and linguistic dispersion.

## Backstory: from colonial beginnings to modern times

To adopt a less exalted, more pragmatic definition of world literature as "works circulating beyond their culture of origin" (Damrosch 2003: 4) is to open up the prospect of a far more extended timescape for American literary emergence as world literature of a certain sort. By this criterion, long before the independence of Europe's former colonies in the Americas, all verbal art by New World inhabitants other than Native Americans was, strictly speaking, world literature or nothing: "British," "German," "Spanish," "French," and so forth. For writers based in what later became the US, the surest way to gain a hearing among literati was to achieve circulation beyond their "country" (i.e. colony) of origin by publishing abroad, meaning Europe, as did the first noteworthy New England poet, Ann Bradstreet, whom her sponsors hopefully dubbed "the tenth muse lately spring up in America." Versions of this strategy of transhemispheric publication persisted long after independence, even as cisatlantic publishing institutions solidified, if only in defense against piracy in the absence of international copyright protection, not secured until 1890. The attendant sense of having to compete unequally with the likes of Scott, Byron, and Dickens – whose stateside appeal far overshadowed that of the most respected national writers – reinforced a chronic frustration at Old World prejudice against American aesthetic prowess that was goaded to the point of paranoia by such pronouncements as *Edinburgh Review* critic Sydney Smith's much-lamented "In the four

quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?" (Smith 1820: 79). That in fact was already an exaggeration. That Benjamin Franklin's memoirs – known today as his *Autobiography* – had first appeared in France (1791) was more symptomatic of transnational enthusiasm for the works of (selected) American icons than of the embryonic state of domestic publishing. Yet the nineteenth-century US remained, albeit diminishingly, "a culture of reprinting" (McGill 2003) whose aspirant authors tended to look to Europe, especially Britain, for models and for approval. It was in that critical climate of lingering deference to foreign judgments that the reputations of the major authors of the middle third of the nineteenth century – the era that F.O. Matthiessen (1941) later proclaimed the "American Renaissance" – were first made. Anglo-European reception figured significantly in almost every case: Emerson and Melville in Britain (Melville wrote his first two books expressly *for* the British market); Poe especially in France; Hawthorne in both Britain and France; Cooper in France and Germany as well as Britain; Whitman first in Britain and then in the Hispanophone and Lusophone worlds before his acceptance at home as the father of American poetry. It helped, additionally, that this cohort's mental horizons stretched well beyond their regional or national home bases: that Emerson was a moral essayist in the tradition of Plutarch and Montaigne; that Cooper wrote nautical fiction and European romances as well as romances of the forest; that the books which made Melville famous in his own time were globe-circling travel narratives; that Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* addressed a national issue perceived to be of world-historical import.

So from the early colonial era through the long nineteenth century it became standard practice for settler-culture writers to seek circulation beyond American borders – and to think beyond them too. Ironically, international recognition could also provoke doubt as to whether it confirmed the emergence of a genuinely autochthonous voice. Were Irving and Longfellow *too* cosmopolitan for the furtherance of a literary breakthrough to match the uniqueness of the American political experiment? So thought Melville, who disdained Irving as a "grasshopper," compared to Hawthorne – even though both Hawthorne and Melville, like Irving, often favored the spectatorial bachelor persona of the British periodical essay tradition emanating from Addison and Steele. So too thought Whitman of Longfellow, that he wrote imitative pastiche – even though Whitman aspired no less earnestly in his own way to encompass all the peoples of the earth and Longfellow from youth to old age devoted many of his poems to "native" themes. Throughout his career, Henry James's American reputation was likewise ambiguated by what now seem absurd complaints that his rarefied fiction focusing on expatriate life was not American enough.

This was the first and most long-standing sense in which the conception of American Literature as "World Literature" has been "fraught." Are we there yet? What *is* distinctive/special/important about "American" literature anyhow? Such worries dragged on until the dawn of modernism. Then came the turnaround: recognition both at home and abroad, almost overnight it now seems, that US *had* met world-class literary standards – that it actually had begun to do so a hundred years earlier, even though a number of now-canonical figures like Cooper and Emerson couldn't bring themselves to believe it. And yet celebration of this fact by

Americanists was on the whole guardedly qualified and soon roiled by a new wave of malaise and disaffection.

## Writing and criticism from the mid-twentieth century onward: from nation-centric to "post-national"

By 1950 American literature had won its long uphill battle for recognition within departments of English, buttressed by an infrastructure of professional associations and journals. The interdiscipline of American studies, a more recent initiative of the 1930s – initially an alliance between literary scholars and historians – was also in place. Crucial to their advancement were a series of seminal attempts, mostly by literary scholars, to delineate formations allegedly distinctive to national literature and culture, with the work of selected national writers as nodal points. Significant examples – by no means an exhaustive list – included Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941) (Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman); R. W. B. Lewis' *The American Adam* (1955) (the myth of American innocence anatomized); Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1957) and Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American* Novel (1960) (arguing for "romance" as against "novel" as the mark of US fictional difference, that featured *inter alia* Brockden Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, James, Faulkner); Roy Harvey Pearce's *The Continuity of American Poetry* (1961) (defining it as an "antinomian" tradition with Puritan roots in Puritanism but achieving fruition in the antiformalism of Whitman and his modernist successors); and Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral ideal in America* (1964) (assigning special import to the "complex pastoral" critiques of techno-economic transformation by Thoreau, Melville, Twain, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner).

This mid-century thrust to define US literary-cultural particularity in terms of "native" formations abetted a certain centripetalism of focus among the next generation of scholars. Few felt obliged to comb through the multitudinous authors now deemed subcanonical as attentively as had predecessors like Fiedler, who had remanded them to the literary substrate. Few influenced by Matthiessen, whose dissertation was on Shakespeare, took the trouble to read so deeply in the literature of the English Renaissance. Even poetry critic Harold Bloom, turning to American literature from an original base in British romanticism, posited different genealogies for British and American poetic succession, as if they belonged in utterly separate compartments. Yet US literary distinctiveness theory was not wholly provincial either in its critical diagnoses or in its ripple effects. For one thing, although the major mid-century Americanist critics were canonizers they were not hagiographers. The framers of the romance hypothesis, for instance, saw American (male) writers' attraction to frontier and wilderness narrative as a mark of sociocultural immaturity. Conversely, they prized what they saw as maverick writing, as with Melville's philosophic heterodoxy, Twain's satirical irreverence, and Whitman's boundary-breaking poetics. This penchant for casting worthwhile American writers as prophets ventured from the social margins reflected a long-standing sense among the national intelligentsia of being themselves at odds with "mainstream" values, the especially chronic popular

suspicion of intellectual work explored in still another defining work of this era, historian Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1964).

The isolation of supposedly distinctive ingredients of the US national imaginary just hastily reviewed was also, paradoxically, itself a cosmopolitanizing phenomenon in at least two ways. First, as a latter-day consummation of what Pascale Casanova calls "the Herder effect" (Casanova 2004: 77ff.), i.e. the constitution of the post-Enlightenment literary world system by coding authors by nation even when so deracinated as a Samuel Beckett, so that "literary capital" becomes "inherently inational capital" (34). Second, through the new apparatus of anthologies, literary histories, "reader's guides" of one sort or another, syllabi, journals, and conference venues, institutionalized American literature and American studies offered themselves as commodities conveniently packaged for export. The crystallization of a body of more-or-less mutually congruent hypotheses about the defining story-lines, patterns of coherence, and distinctive achievements of the "major" US writers surely facilitated their dissemination abroad and thereby the promotion of US literature as world literature in the basic but crucial sense of being worthy of the world's interest.

One sign of that momentum was the emergence in the 1960s of influential Americanist work by scholars opting to pursue their careers chiefly in their home countries, in books that reflected and furthered the menu of new mid-twentieth-century consensus theories, e.g. Ursula Brumm's *Die religiöse Typologie im amerikanischen Denken* (1963, translated 1970), Tony Tanner's *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (1965), and A.N. Kaul's *The American Vision* (1965). Today a considerably greater fraction of leading Americanists are foreign-born scholars either trained or based abroad; and the proportion is bound to keep growing, albeit the leading centers for American literature studies will likely remain mostly in the US if only because of superior funding and archival holdings. That an increasing percentage of the world's population now speaks today's lingua franca with an American accent is symptomatic of American literature – and, even more, American film and other popular media – having achieved a global circulation as never before. Today the world's creative writers and critics know much more about American literature than today's American literati know about theirs – a striking contrast from three-quarters of a century ago. That D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) stands as the first sustained interpretation by a foreign man of letters to influence the field reflects not only that author's idiosyncratic genius but also the exceptional seriousness with which he took US literary history, notwithstanding his trenchant critique of its limitations. (Indeed, Lawrence here surpassed virtually all leading American men and women of letters too, from Poe and Emerson and Margaret Fuller through World War I.) But by the start of the twenty-first century American writing had long since become absorbed into the DNA of world literature at large, so that novelists as unlike as Arundhati Roy and Peter Carey could cite Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in passing, with confidence that their allusions would be understood. In the early nineteenth century, Cooper's romances of settler–native contact crucially influenced the premodern "foundational fictions" of Latin American nationhood, but it was not until the late twentieth century that this became widely recognized (see Sommer 1991: 55–81). But Faulkner's impact on the

mid-twentieth-century "boom" of Latin American magical realist fiction was noticed almost at once.

Yet American literature specialists – especially those based in the US – have preferred, especially since the 1970s, to tell the story of this rising prestige in a distinctly non-triumphalist key. One key reason is surely political disenchantment, aggravated by rueful awareness of strategic governmental and foundation promotion of American studies at home and abroad during the Cold War era (see Shumway 1994: 312–13). Relative to their mid-century predecessors, who tended to side with American liberal democratic ideals against the Soviet alternative, late twentieth-century Americanists increasingly retold the history of mainstream national culture and expression as a narrative of domination from genocidal conquest to manifest destiny to "imperial" super-power. For literature studies, this revisionism effectively began with historian Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration through Violence* (1973), the first of a post-Vietnam trilogy that reads settler-culture wilderness and frontier discourse from the Puritan era to the present as energized by violence unleashed in the contact zone. The critical anthology *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, 1993) confirms the establishment by the 1990s of this grand narrative of disaffection as the new normal for US literary and cultural studies. It also gives a sense of the connecting links, partial but substantive, between that revisionism and the "worlding" of American literature that is this essay's more central concern.

Up to a point, what I am calling the new grand narrative developed as an internal critique of received readings of familiar literary icons, such that Emerson and Thoreau, for example, became reframed as more closely identified with (white) New England than with ethnic others and as residually if not consistently sympathetic with US manifest destinarianism, rather than as advocates for individual integrity against bigotry and chauvinism. (This new normal, incidentally, may be destined for significant revision if not outright supercession in turn – e.g. for Emerson, see Branka Arsić's *On Leaving* [2010] and Johannes Voelz's *Transcendental Resistance* [2010] – both by no coincidence European-trained Americanists. But that is another story.) Post-1970 revisionism becomes especially significant for our purposes to the extent that it corrected against high canonicalism by foregrounding marginal/minoritarian perspectives and, beyond that, by showing all players in this expanded field as embedded somehow in diasporic or transcultural discursive webs, as with José Saldívar's reading of Amerigo Paredes' anti-American dream novel of the Texas borderlands *George Washington Gomez* or Doris Sommer's cross-cultural examination of rhetorics of nondisclosure in narratives of Rigoberta Menchú and Toni Morrison as subaltern strategies (Kaplan and Pease 1993: 292–311, 407–32). As these essays show, concomitantly with the work of anti-imperial revisionist critique within US literature studies has come a deparochialization of positively seismic proportions in the understanding of what counts as American literature that has countered the mid-twentieth-century emphasis on defining the field in terms of putatively autonomous patterns, to the end of resuturing US literature to the other literatures/cultures of the world.

Until the 1960s, "American literature" effectively meant Euro-settler literatures, by writers of Anglo-Protestant stock especially. With scattered exceptions, few leading

Americanists cared much either about minority-group writing or about non-European influences. The exceptions were cases involving "major" figures, e.g. Ezra Pound's passion for classical Chinese poetry and Confucian thought. Early scholarship on Twain or Faulkner was attentive to their views of African Americans, but not to the possibility of reciprocal influence – not in whether Twain might have been significantly influenced by slave narrative or Faulkner by black cultural practices. The literary canon of the mid-century Americanist framers was also overwhelmingly male as well as white, Emily Dickinson and Edith Wharton excepted.

After 1970, this changed drastically. Women's writing and the various US minority literatures became studied far more intensively. This shift was partly driven by social megatrends, most notably the feminist and civil rights movements and the changing composition of university populations that ensued from them and from the liberalization of immigration policy in the 1960s. But even more decisive was that national literature itself was changing in ways too obvious to ignore. Since the 1920s, US writing has been invigorated as never before by a series of ethnic renaissances: African American, Jewish American, Asian American, Latino or Hispanic American, Native American. What literary historian David Shumway writes of the rise of mid-century American literature studies' high canon broadly holds for the counter-canon of the 1970s and after: it "emerged out of judgments made outside of the academy" but "ratified by it" (Shumway 1994: 180).

All these ethnic literary renaissances, furthermore, entailed a reimagination of "American" writing under the sign not just of ethnicity but also of transnationalism: of immigration and/or diaspora and/or pluralities of cultural belonging: e.g. the evocation of the Middle Passage in Morrison's *Beloved*, to name but one of many instances, and of middle passages in the plural in Morrison's *A Mercy*; the ghosts of family memory and country-of-origin legend in Maxine Kingston's *Woman Warrior* and Teresa Hak Cha's *Dictée*; Holocaust memory in Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer* and *The Plot Against America*; indigenous panhemispheric memory in Leslie Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. Such fictive remappings of "American" experience have gone hand in hand with a concurrent critical remapping of the boundaries as well as the *dramatis personae* of American literary history over time, such that, relative to the 1960s, today's anthologies of American literature are far more thoroughgoingly "multicultural" from colonial to postmodern, recognizing, for example, the multilingualism of early settler writing and the antecedence of native orature.

This expanded scene of literary production and critical activity has made it seem almost self-evident to twenty-first-century Americanists that national literature, or literary US-ness, cannot be thought of as contained within national borders, either territorial or cultural. In particular, the past two decades have seen dramatically intensified critical interest in literary/cultural mobility and interaction within and among three international zones: the Atlantic world, the American hemisphere, and the transpacific. The first (predictably) is the most fully developed, drawing as it does on long-standing critical interest in the transatlantic percolations of Anglo-European romanticism, the French and Spanish influences on early national literati, and so forth. But today's Euro-American transatlanticism is less concerned with transmissions from old world to new than with reciprocal exchange or circulation, as with

British Americanist Paul Giles's conception of US and British literary histories of the past 200 years as charting their respective trajectories via complex processes of mutual engagement and reaction (see his *Virtual America* [2002] and *Atlantic Republic* [2006]).

The strongest impetus behind recent Atlantic world studies, however, has come from Afro-Atlantic studies, particularly two seminal books by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Paul Gilroy. Gates's *The Signifying Monkey* (1988) traces the figure of the trickster from West Africa through African American literary history. Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993) charts the cultural and literary history and memory of slavery throughout the Afro-Atlantic world. Their work is now being refined by successors like Brent Edwards, whose *Practice of Diaspora* (2003) reconstructs the history of interactions among black literati in New York, Paris, and Francophone Africa during the 1920s and 1930s. Here the basic operating metaphor is not diffusion but network, as also in Anita Haya Patterson's *Race, American Literature, and Transnational Modernism* (2008), which reconceives poetic modernism not as the work of French and Anglo-American literati alone but as a more complex transatlantic project to which Franco- and Anglo-Caribbean writers – white, black, creole – all contributed.

Patterson's book also reflects the reconception of "American" literature in hemispheric terms. Initiated by scholars of Latino/a studies based in the US, the new hemispheric American studies first concentrated – as did early African American studies – on drawing attention to the growing body of fine but largely unknown Hispano/a creative writing and in critiquing traditional Anglocentric Americanists' chronic neglect of its long history and restrictive assumptions of "America" itself. This revisionism was always already transnational in a way that African American studies took longer to achieve, as instanced by José Saldívar's *Dialectics of Our America* (1991), which reconceives "American" literary and cultural geography with Havana at the center. Subsequent hemispheric studies take up more complex interdependencies among Anglophone and Hispanophone new world cultures and sometimes Francophone and Afro-Atlantic as well, e.g. Kirsten Silva Greusz's *Ambassadors of Culture* (2002) and Anna Brickhouse's *Transamerican Literary Relations* (2004). Ramón Saldívar's *The Borderlands of Culture: Amerigo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary* (2006) pushes the geographical envelope still further in its section on the significance of Paredes' sojourn in Japan after World War II.

This brings us to transpacific studies, the most heterogeneous of all. Here the question more quickly arises of the extent to which "Asian American literature" can legitimately be generalized, given the multiplicity and disparateness of the cultures of origin of the writers in question. Yet common threads linking the work of writers of different transpacific heritage, including confrontation with lumping stereotypes of Asians, as well as fine distinctions amongst different diasporic experiences and memories, have been persuasively established in such influential works as Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts* (1996) and David Palumbo-Liu's *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (1999), to name but two. Meanwhile, Americanists working from the advantage of bi- or multilingual expertise have begun to reconstruct the histories of individual Asian/American literary migrations in both languages (e.g. Xiao-huang Yin's *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s* [2006])

and to reconceive selected transpacific projects as collective constructs (e.g. Takayuki Tatsumi's *Full Metal Apache* [2006], which argues for the Japanese provenance of the concept of the cyborg or techno-biotic body in "American" popular imagination).

A number of the projects here surveyed, from Gates's to Yin's and Tatsumi's, point to the likelihood that, in order to continue to make good on the promise of the polycentric internationalism to which they seem increasingly committed in principle, literary Americanists will be expected to show mastery, not just superficial awareness, of more of the world's literatures, and in the original languages, than the first framers of the field in the mid-twentieth century would ever have dreamed. The sympathetic critical reception accorded Harvard's Longfellow Project, headed by Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, focused on study and translation of the non-Anglophone literatures of America, seems another such augury (see the critical anthology *Multilingual America* [1998], ed. Sollors, to which Yin contributed a chapter). What seems more certain than the prospect of really dramatic growth of multilingualism within US literature studies, however, is that Americanists will continue to take a more self-consciously cosmopolitan view than formerly of the relation between "American" imaginaries and the rest of the world, and furthermore that we should expect sharply discrepant versions of this for a long time to come: discrepant in archive, in argument, in analytical texture. A pair of examples that might serve as final cases in point are Amy Kaplan's *The Anarchy of Empire* (2002) and Wai Chee Dimock's *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (2006). The former situates US fiction and film from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth in the context of continued subjugation of non-whites at home and the pursuit of imperial ambitions abroad. The latter offers a series of exemplary thought experiments in re-envisioning cultural memory of US writing from the Transcendentalists to the present as profoundly interdependent with that of European, Asian, and African imaginaries. The two critical positions could hardly be more divergent: one assesses US literary culture's prevailing view of the rest of the world as arrogant, self-centered, possessive; the other treats it as infinitely curious, permeable, open to influence. What they have in common is a commitment never again to think of US literary history without regard to those of the rest of the world's cultures.

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# 46
# AFRICAN ROADS

*Nirvana Tanoukhi*

### The survey

A survey of African literature must privilege either a temporal or a spatial organization. In the first case, a chronological approach would lend itself to revisionist ambitions, to substantiating a forgotten or ignored oral tradition that includes premodern African genres like the unscripted drama or song, folktale or oratory, along with written forms that would otherwise be excluded by belletristic conceptions of the literary. Such a survey might even expand the domain of textual inscription to include the artistic composition of sculptures or edifices, masks or rock art. And, to this purpose, it might go further and refashion literary history into a history of writing, to cite the exceptional rise of Swahili literature in the East and recall the Arabization of Futa Tooro in the West, or even trace back Ethiopic Ge'ez literature to the pre-Christian Sabaean script. The temporal scale, thus extended, would set the stage for the work of periodization, to enact the very "historical movement" (Hegel 1975) that the survey wishes to reclaim.

In the second case, a panoramic approach would perform a structuralist rather than historicist representation of literary change, favoring the instruments of classification over those of periodization. Then a survey would stress the heterogeneity (of indigenous and colonial languages), hybridity (of creole languages and dialects), variation (in styles or generic choices), and competition (among national, regional, or ethnic traditions). In so accounting for African literature, one would then be able to speak, for instance, of the sobriety of the West African novel versus the lightness of its East African counterpart, the nativism of early Francophone poets versus the nationalism of their Anglophone brethren, or of the populism of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o of Kenya versus the idealism of Wole Soyinka of Nigeria. Instead of presenting the story of African literature in a sequence of periods punctuated by historical turning points, the goal of this kind of survey would be to sharpen the boundaries of a literary field whose formative Atlantic influences have been internalized as *structural* tensions, legible on a continental scale.

But a survey, much like a map, of African literature chooses a particular temporal or spatial scale as the solution to a preconceived problem – in the first case, sub-Saharan Africa's relatively recent expansion of literacy; in the second, the early geo-racialization of its identity. But whether its trajectory is revisionist or territorialist – that is, whether it aims to conjure *historical movement* or *structural integrity* – in neither

case can a survey interrogate the problem to which it offers itself as a solution. We must look elsewhere to understand the place of African literature in a world history of uneven development.

## The road

"Savages throw away their bows and arrows for rifles all at once, without traveling the road which lay between those two weapons in the past" (Trotsky 1932: 3): this is the image drawn by Leon Trotsky to illustrate what he called *combined and uneven development*. It is a mode of development where historical backwardness is a peculiar privilege – the privilege of underdeveloped nations to simply assimilate what they might lack from the advanced cultures they encounter, and to do so without the necessity (indeed, without the possibility) to reinvent the instruments of historical progress. Trotsky's formulation of combined and uneven development, which injects hope into the accelerated leap from savagery to modernity, would seem to betray a teleological ring to the contemporary ear. A rifle, one might respond, is clearly not a novel. And yet, while one could have a fundamental philosophical quarrel with teleological thinking, it is not logically self-evident why Trotsky's optimism for technological assimilation (perhaps itself questionable) might not apply in the realm of culture. Why did the adoption, for example, of the novel by African writers raise difficulties for its practitioners, their critics, as well as theorists of the African literary system? In fact, no genre in modern African literature has been more subject to imitation, explication, and comparison – the three practices which together comprise the tripartite engine of literary assimilation – than the novelistic form. So if there is truth in Goethe's claim that "world literature" involves a complex process of literary assimilation among nations (Eckermann 1930), then we must turn to those inaugural moments of the African novel's literary institutionalization, to gain an understanding of Africa's relation to world literature in this ethos of "the road" not taken.

The most spectacular of modern African literature's inaugural moments is undoubtedly Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), an honor which makes this novel not an African work *of* world literature, but an exemplary African instance of the concept's realization. Not for nothing has Achebe's novel been credited for single-handedly "inventing African culture" (Gikandi 2001). For why indeed did *Things Fall Apart* succeed where other "first" African novels like René Maran's *Batouala* (1921), Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (1930), or Amos Tutuola's once celebrated *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) evidently fail? The short answer, which amends and refines Goethe's basic conception of *Weltliteratur*, is that *Things Fall Apart* activates the dialectic of *setting* and *context* – that is, of internal and external geography – such that the question of African identity (which the Négritude movement of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire had established as a spiritual landscape to discover) for the first time becomes a *formal* question for African writers, critics, and theorists of the genre itself. This is to say that Achebe's novel did not produce a new understanding of what it means to be African, but managed to do something more difficult: it foregrounded the impetus to explore the full range of possibilities for

formulating the very question. In a sense, it replaced the old quest for *the* African road with a perpetual search for its truest form.

## The setting

By all accounts, *Things Fall Apart* makes for a strange cultural beginning. The novel's first pages, to which a reader might reasonably bring standard expectations of an introductory exposition, instead offer a feeble foundation for a psychoanalytic reading of the hero, Okonkwo, in relation to his father, Unoka. An early reading of the novel by one of Achebe's major explicators, Abiola Irele, notes how, from the very first sentence, "The vagueness with which the narrator indicates the outer limits of Okonkwo's fame reflects the tribe's limited awareness of its location in space, of its specific place in the world" (Irele 2001: 121). In its vagueness, the novel defers, at least initially, the sustained elaboration of local scenes and Igbo customs for which it has acquired and retained the status of an African classic. Achebe's masterful fusion of the description of habitations and landscapes, on the one hand, and an ethnography of a community's values and mores, on the other, takes off in the second chapter, appropriately in a scene of the market-place. And when it does, *Things Fall Apart* offers the reader, in Irele's words, "an elaborate representation of *setting* and [one] involving in the process an insistence in positive terms upon the *cultural context* within which his fictional characters have their being … The Igbo tribal world emerges here in *all of its specificity*, its daily routines and seasonal rituals attuned to the natural rhythms of its living environment" (Irele 2001: 120, emphasis added). Achebe's greatest achievement was therefore to depict a society's matter-of-fact existence, a genuine lack of geographic self-consciousness that was possible only before the advent of colonization.

For other critics, however, narrative technique in *Things Fall Apart* betrayed a split consciousness that appeared inevitable for African literature in colonial languages. While critics like Irele or Bernth Lindfors (1979) believed that an Anglophone African novel can employ the structures and motifs of a native oral literature to forge a continuity with pre-colonial narrative traditions, others instead found that it merely catalyzed the commodification of an African oral tradition for a metropolitan readership. Convinced of the latter, Obiajunwa Wali (and later Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o) would famously pronounce African literature in non-native languages a mere "dead end" (Wali 1963; Ngũgĩ 1981). Thus Irele's defense of Achebe, against the charge of anthropologizing African culture in *Things Fall Apart*, was basically to argue that Achebe's unique manipulation of setting enhances the *specificity*, rather than the *typicality*, of Igbo culture. Such a distinction between specificity and typicality is but a sample of the intricate stakes of producing Africanness through novelistic form – unlike earlier attempts at definition, by influential diasporic Africans in the New World such as Alexander Crummel, Edward Blyden, or W.E.B. Du Bois. Such passages in the literary criticism of Irele, as in the countless critics who grappled favorably or contentiously with Achebe's technique of narration, would suggest that the novel's foundational quality (this capacity to "invent" a culture) lay not in discovering an optimal fusion of description and ethnography that yielded an African

essence, but rather in opening up apparently self-evident cultural specificities (like "Africanness," "Igbo-ness," "Nigerian-ness") to collective scrutiny. The question of Africa's relation to world literature is therefore the very question of how a fictional Igbo village with a vague nomination – Umuofia, or "People of the Forest" – becomes, if not the paradigmatic, certainly the emblematic pre-colonial African village in the minds of readers of literature everywhere.

## The context

In *Things Fall Apart*, says Irele, narrative setting "insists in a positive way upon" a social context (Irele 2001: 120). We could paraphrase this to say that Achebe, in his manipulation of setting and context, succeeded in capturing that cultural "specificity" which others pursued with little success. But to put the matter comparatively is not entirely innocent, for by seeking to isolate the attributes that explain the success of this novel against the failure of others, we have already moved from the sphere of literary criticism to that of literary theory. From a theoretical point of view, the fact that Achebe's method has been deemed "positive," even by Irele as a representative of a local constituency of readers, is not in itself significant. What matters is the possibility of determining the categories by which to judge why the novel works in a particular way *and not another*. For readers of African fiction, theoretical moves are especially fraught. One must pause and consider the risks involved in a comparison of Achebe's Umuofia to, say, Hardy's Mary Green, or even García Márquez's Macondo. This is because the moment of comparison, for an African novel, effectively launches a dialogue between novelistic traditions whose aesthetic valuation is supported by vastly unequal institutional infrastructures around (and beyond) the Atlantic. For justifiable reasons, the study of African literature has historically cultivated a cautious distance from theory, with the marked exception of Marxist literary analysis. The aversion to theory and affinity to "close reading" has assumed different degrees and guises (Chinweizu and Madubuike 1980; Miller 1990; Quayson 2003), of course not without exceptions (Gates 1984; Mudimbe 1988; Harrow 1997), but ensuring that scholarship about African literature be generally produced within authorial, generic, generational, or more broadly historicist and national frameworks. To study African literature against a horizon of world literature we must confront this legacy and engage it on its own terms, a task to be facilitated for us, in what follows, by Ghanaian cultural philosopher Anthony Kwame Appiah, whose assessment of African literature's disciplinary relation to theory – both analytically complex and politically sentient – well represents the anti-theoretical stance and, for our purpose, its limitations (Appiah 1992).

Addressing African critics who have called for excavating an African literary theory, Appiah warns that theoretical nativism achieves little more than a particularist analogue to a universalist Western tradition. The problem with Euro-American theory, he finds, is not that it is Anglo-European, but that it is *theory* – which he associates with a deductive-nomothetic analytical model that extracts general laws from particular literary texts, often belonging to the Anglo-European canon of high

culture. In this account, theorization derives from establishing an analogy between a raw literary text and a previously aestheticized work, such that the incoming object is made to display, in the process of a protracted comparison, both a meaningful commonality with the already-canonized object and an artificial commensurability with its text-milieu. At each step, a reduction takes place, presumably in the form of a decontextualization. The problem, accordingly, is that the African text is embedded (as a condition of theory) in a methodological hierarchy, where it is forced to shed its *specificity* as a condition of comparability. "To the extent that African writing fails to conform to a literary theory in this strong [nomothetic] sense, that is a problem of the theory, revealing it as yet another local principle masquerading as universal, and this is the problem we can begin to address only and precisely by a serious analysis of African texts" (Appiah 1992: 64). Serious analysis of African literature, he concludes, would better be sought in the "humbler aims of literary criticism, which is concerned with the specificity of particular texts and literatures and may be concerned with what we value in reading as an encounter with specific texts" (64).

How does all this help us to read an African text like *Things Fall Apart*? Like Irele, Appiah offers an answer that concerns the relation of *setting* to *context*. An Anglophone African novel often seems, Appiah says, unable "to take its setting for granted," for it must make an added effort to contextualize for "a readership that encompasses communities wider than any 'traditional' culture" (Appiah 1992: 70). However, accounts of "kinship and family, marriage and status," he says, do not logically imply that the intended audience is metropolitan, for these descriptions equally benefit Nigerian readers of various subcultural affiliations as well as diverse African audiences. But more crucially, this technique of "rehearsing the familiar" draws on the convention of an African oral tradition where refamiliarization works as "a device not of alienation but of incorporation" (71). In the same discussion, Appiah offers Okot p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino* as an example for how contextual information such as the facts that "that Acoli marriage is polygamous, that Acoli tradition holds that ghosts bring fevers, that the Acoli traditionally expected people to 'grow old gracefully' … is available in the poem" (Appiah 1992:m67). In contrast, *Things Fall Apart* requires that the alien reader be provided with "those aspects of context" which cannot be communicated to the external reader. For after all, there is a limit to "what the text itself may show us."

Notice this move of attributing the specificity of a novel like *Things Fall Apart* to African culture's rootedness in the oral tradition. Appiah's sensitive abstraction from critical accounts of Achebe's technique is crucial. It essentially builds – through a comparative, if not explicitly theoretical, procedure – a defense not of a specific text, like *Things Fall Apart* or *Arrow of God*, but of a type of novel which may or may not be African, but which could more generally be dubbed "postcolonial." In fact, with Appiah's critique of Achebe's critics (including Irele), a minimalist sketch of the full journey of canonization triggered by *Things Fall Apart* emerges into view. We see Achebe's text moving into the sphere of commentary, accruing value in the process of critical accumulation, then finally acquiring its theoretical candidacy as an object of comparison. As for the distinction made between

the communicable context that is fully embedded in *Song of Lawino* and the auxiliary context that must presumably supplement the reading (or teaching) of *Things Fall Apart*, its significance lies not in implying two forms of description – the first necessitating a reading that is structural, the second a reading that is historical – but rather that in *raising* the question of context, Achebe (unlike p'Bitek) invites us (as he did Appiah) to comparison. This means that engaging an African novel is worthwhile not exactly because of "what we value" (Appiah's formulation) in encounters with specific texts, but because *some* might afford readers an opportunity to reflect on how certain values became their own.

## African roads

Comparison is unavoidable, if our goal is to understand the entanglement of African texts in the uneven dynamics of cultural assimilation. Engaging "world literature" as a research program means embarking on the difficult but necessary project of reforming the political and ethical premises of the comparative method. Necessary and unavoidable, or Achebe would not have given Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) as much thought while writing *Things Fall Apart*. For Achebe, Conrad was not a writer who had made a literary depiction of Africa, but one who contributed directly to an insurmountable gulf between Africa and Europe: "It is a great irony of history and geography that Africa, whose land mass is closer than any other to the mainland of Europe, should come to occupy in European psychological disposition the farthest point of otherness, should indeed become Europe's very antithesis" (Achebe 1997: 103). A writer who chooses "to write about places that actually exist and about people who live in them" (107), says Achebe, should have learned better the history of the Congo, for then he would have learned about Nzinga Mbemba, who had been exchanging royal epistles with the Portuguese court four hundred years before Conrad ever set foot in the Congo. Achebe's impassioned corrective – "Yes, four hundred!" – tempts us, justifiably, to include such fascinating letters in a survey or anthology of world literature. But the gesture would not be enough to help us understand Achebe's choice. The question is why Achebe himself did not make his first novel on this marvelous King of the Congo: Nzinga Mbemba, Dom Afonso, the illustrious King Afonso I.

Achebe too chose *not* to tell the story of a well-trafficked African setting. Even when it depicts paths of abduction and banishment, *Things Fall Apart* remains, until the very last pages, confined to the internal network of "the nine villages." There are no roads in Achebe's novel, certainly no roads of adventure, risk, or encounter. The grand encounter with the colonizer unfolds instead as the seeping of the white man into the cultural fabric of Umuofia. Which is not to say that the "iron horse" (unlike Trotsky's rifle) comes peaceably with its colonial owners; what begins as a series of skirmishes culminates in Okonkwo's tragic fate. But the absence of roads makes us wonder whether "the narrow range of physical setting" (Appiah 1992: 460) has enabled the structural integrity of Umuofia, and by extension, the formal elegance of Achebe's marvel of novelistic realism – whether Umuofia became the emblematic African village because it could stand in perfect (if temporary) repose,

while flaunting the internal cracks in its harmony. In approaching Achebe's construction of Umuofia as a choice, we are already moving away from a model of "close reading" which takes the specificity of a literary event (the fact that it is strictly unrepeatable) to mean that it is de facto unique, and therefore, incomparable. It means that we have decided not to foreclose comparison for fear of a nativist African theory, but instead have chosen to pose the question of what could be *gained* from opening up African texts – or African *roads* – to comparison. And the answer is already implicit in Achebe's account of Africa's paradoxical position in Europe's "psychological" map: comparison allows us to do much more than insist that African texts are context-specific creations – it enables us to recognize the ambition of *some* African texts (like Achebe's) to transform the logic and procedures of historical contextualism, an enterprise for which the adoption of the novelistic genre, with its embedded critique of European historicism (Auerbach 1953), has been also a meaningful *choice*. The theory of the novel tells us that the road is the most common chronotope for the depiction of encounters "by representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages" (Bakhtin 1981). And yet Achebe chooses the roadless horizon of "the nine villages" in which Umuofia is neatly nested.

But we must not forget that other African writers chose differently: in René Maran's *Batouala* (1921), the first African winner of the Prix Goncourt, the Angolan brush (which "talked morning to night, morning to night like an old woman" (Maran 1921: 149) leads the stately chief through paths as meandering as the novel's point of view; in Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir* (1954), a novel disguised as autobiography, railroad locomotives brush against the reed fence of a Guinean concession, setting off fires that foreshadow the son's inevitable journey from Kouroussa to the concluding moment, in Paris, when his eyes fall on a map of the city metro; in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* (1961) the physical road is less palpable, but its structure organizes the intellectual journey of Samba Diallo, beginning with his Islamic education in a Fula village of Senegal, to the foreign school in the "town of L," to a Parisian university and back again; in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1989), "the stretch of road between the fields and the terminus" (2) inspires the peripatetic internal monologues by which the Zimbabwean heroine gauges the mutual transformation of self and place; and in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), the roads of the child-hero's wanderlust produce an emotional landscape that magically reconciles the sprightly play of spirit children with the unspoken misery of ghetto-dwellers.

There are more African novelistic settings than we can count or describe here, but in each of those mentioned, the choice of spatial and temporal scale attempts a new synthesis of the hero's journey, on the one hand, and the landscape's transformation, on the other. By comparing these choices as *contextual strategies*, something like an African critique of historicism comes into view – a critique whose specificity does not emanate from pre-existing identities or values (too easily legitimated as "local," "communal," or "African") – but one that gains robustness in accumulation. Where is Africa in world literature? It is in the accumulation of formal, critical, and theoretical strategies by which Africanness (as a beginning) and Africa (as a horizon of possibility) remain works-in-progress.

## African extremes

Envisaged as such, the settings of the African novel – whether their roads are thematic or structural – make cracks in Europe's psychological geography, while the African survey remains, without much exaggeration, haunted by Hegel's treatment of sub-Saharan Africa under the "Geographical Basis of History" in his *The Philosophy of History* (1822).

> Africa must be divided into three parts: one is that which lies south of the desert of Sahara – Africa proper … the second is that to the north of the desert – European Africa … a coastland; the third is the river region of the Nile, the only valley-land of Africa, and which is in connection with Asia.
>
> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained – for all purposes of connection with the rest of the World – shut up [ … ] The second portion of Africa is the river district of the Nile – Egypt; which was adapted to become a mighty centre of independent civilization, and therefore is as isolated and singular in Africa as Africa itself appears in relation to the other parts of the world. The northern part of Africa … must be attached to Europe … it looks Europe-wards. …
>
> (Hegel 1822: 148–49)

As an academic discipline, the field of African literature has largely conceded Hegel's segmentation of Africa into its sub-Saharan and North African parts. But the notion that North African literature in Arabic and French looks upwards toward the "Middle East" is an assumption about which the literature of this region is ambivalent at best. We cannot forget that the roads taken by Tawfiq al-Hakim's hero in *Bird of the East* (1938) and Yahya Haqqi's in *The Saint's Lamp* (1944) (both from Egypt) share the same formal structure as that of Kane's hero in *L'aventure ambiguë* (1961) and Achebe's in *No Longer at Ease* – and that it was al-Tayyeb Saleh's black Arab hero from Sudan in *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) who pushed this well-worn generic structure to its formal limits. Al-Hakim, Haqqi, Kane, Achebe, and Saleh belong (at minimum) to a common *generic* stream, whose comparative horizons no longer need be ignored. African roads may well lead us away from the old story of African extremes.

Some will inevitably argue that not all roads lead to the novel – for it would be impossible to discount the evocations of Ogun, God-of-the-Road, in Wole Soyinka's dramas and essays. Others will warn that not all roads lead to Western Europe – for there are protagonists, as in Ivan Vladislavich's South African short story "Propaganda by Monuments" (1996), who pursue not Parisian but Moscovian relics. And we will, of course, have to ask whether the road is a category broad enough to lend itself, unproblematically, to cross-cultural comparison – whether it can serve as the basis of theoretical inquiry. But even then, we must think of alternative choices. In searching for the place of African literature in a world history of uneven development, we cannot simply expand the context from the continent to the Atlantic, or from the Atlantic to the world. Nor would it help to contract the scale of inquiry to national, ethnic, or tribal cultures. The task is rather to understand how African

texts, like *Things Fall Apart*, have utilized the resources at their disposal to produce lasting *context-effects*.

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# 47
# WORLD LITERATURE AND EAST ASIAN LITERATURE

*Red Chan*

A useful start to understanding "world literature" in East Asia is to think in terms of cross-cultural interactions within the region. A historical perspective demands that we start with China. The long and powerful Chinese cultural hegemony, especially through the Confucian schools of thought, left a lasting impact on the development of China's neighbors. The Confucian canon is indeed "the repository of a cultural grammar" which "constituted the interpretive community of those with an orthodox education in East Asia" (Lee 2003: 5). Chinese literary norms, canons of poetry, lyrical prose, and classical novels have shaped both the ideological consciousness and the literary taste of the gentry and ruling class of East Asian countries, especially Japan and Korea.

When modernization and westernization exposed China, Japan, and the entire East Asian region to new cultural imaginations from the later nineteenth century on, Anglo-European influences prevailed. Modern literatures in East Asia subsequently developed along a more dichotomized East/West, traditional/modern path. During its colonization of Korea (1910–45) and Taiwan (1895–1945), Japan cast a different spell on the literatures of those two countries with its own variant of modern aesthetics. The two world wars of the twentieth century oriented East Asia towards American culture, though writers of Mainland China were denied access to this during the Cold War period.

The spread of "world literature" is heavily dependent on translation. In the case of East Asia, though, the language of literature was largely monolingual in classical times, as Chinese was the lingua franca in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. When Chinese civilization arrived in those countries, none had a script of its own. The Chinese writing system, coupled with the sophisticated Confucian bureaucracy, became the vehicle of development. It was not until Western modernization began to take hold of the region that translation became pivotal for both literary and cultural developments. Recent decades of technological advancement have triggered fundamental changes in cultural behavior, giving rise to more dialogical, global, and virtual encounters. The literatures of East Asia are drawing inspirations from pluralistic sources, within as well as beyond their own region.

This article is intended as an introductory survey that outlines some aspects of "world literature" in the context of East Asia. Its particular focus on China as a historical influence provides a paradigm that juxtaposes literary developments of Japan and Korea in light of Chinese civilization. One observes how, during a millennium of hierarchical cultural dominance over Japan and Korea, China has shaped the literary contours of those countries, with an important ongoing role amid the growing internationalism of contacts, especially with the West, in the modern period. Key texts and authors are mentioned to illustrate how non-native literary norms and aesthetics traveled beyond their national boundaries. The reader should also refer to surveys by Bailey (1996), Morris (1996), and Thornber (2009), whose critical assessment of representative texts and authors in contemporary China (Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), Japan, and Korea also situate East Asian literatures within the rubric of world literature.

## China

The introduction of Buddhism from India is perhaps the single most significant cross-cultural event in pre-modern China. It started in the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220) and continues to the present day. During the Tang dynasty (618–907), thousands of translator-monks were employed by the court to render Buddhist texts for the Chinese audience. Systematic theories and standards of translation were established (Chu 2000). Active collaborations between (Han) Chinese and non-(Han) Chinese monks, scholars and officials bore witness to movements and cultural mingling between different ethnicities in central and western regions of China (especially along the Silk Road) in classical times (Hung 2005). Religious impact aside, Buddhism plays a considerable role in developing Chinese culture and literature. Through neologism or invention of new words, the Chinese language has been enriched by translations of Buddhist sutras. Over 90 percent of Chinese four-character set phrases ("chengyu") with a foreign origin have their root in Buddhism. Interestingly, pronunciations of Chinese transcriptions of Indian proper names and Buddhist technical terms in early Chinese Buddhist translations have become useful data for reconsideration of assumptions about the history of Indian Buddhist languages and texts (Boucher 1998).

The introduction of Buddhism to China is memorably recorded in the adventures of Tripitaka (known in Chinese as Xuanzang, 602 – 664) in the novel *Journey to the West* (also known as *Monkey*, ascribed authorship Wu Cheng'en, published anonymously in the 1590s). Poets such as Tao Qian (also Cao Yuan-ming, 365–427), or Wang Wei, Han Shan, and Li Shangyin of the Tang dynasty are known for the resonances of Buddhist themes and imagery in their work, and are prime examples of Chinese "nature poetry." Thanks to Arthur Waley, Burton Watson, Gary Snyder, and other English translators, Buddhist spirituality in Chinese nature poetry has inspired the cultural and literary milieu in the West, for instance among the Beat Generation.

In the modern period, foreign literature first circulated in China through translation and the vehicle of journals and magazines (Tsu 2010). As early as 1833, Prussian

Lutheran missionary K.F. August Gutzlaff founded the first Chinese journal in Guangzhou (Canton). The journal carried information about the Western world and there was a section on literature (Lie 2010: 383–84; Beecroft 2010). In 1934, the first-ever journal to be devoted to the introduction of foreign literature was founded in Shanghai, with the title *Yiwen*, literally "translated texts/works." Under the leadership of two eminent writers of modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun and Mao Dun, the journal published essays, fiction, and drama from the Soviet Union, France, Japan, Hungary, and other countries. During its three years of existence, over a hundred translated pieces were published (Chen 1989: 279–81). In 1953, the journal was resurrected under the new title of *World Literature*. It was the only journal of foreign literature in China before the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). According to its current chief editor, Yu Zhongxian, the journal was the first to bring Joyce's *Ulysses*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and Calvino's *The Nonexistent Knight* to the Mainland (Yu 2010: 380–81).

Between 1928 and 1934, seventy-one journals were founded in mainland China (Lie 2010: 386), significantly shaping the trend and taste of Chinese readership of world literature. The importing of Soviet literature and literary criticism during that period was instrumental for the formation and development of socialist literature in China, and the journal remains a primary channel of literary appreciation for Chinese readers as well as writers. It is even suggested that because Chinese journals have not been sufficiently internationalized, "Chinese literature and its study have not properly entered the realm of world literature studies and exchange," causing "an imbalance in the study and exchange of world literature" (Lie 2010: 386).

*Yilin* (English title *Translation: A Magazine of Foreign Literature*), currently the most widely read journal of translated foreign literature in China, was set up in 1979 when China began to open up again after the Cultural Revolution. In the 1980s, the journal published 282 translated literary texts from thirty-six countries, 18 percent of them from the USA, 14 percent from France, 11 percent from the UK, and 13 percent from Japan (Zhang 2010: 410).

There are several hundred journals currently in circulation in Mainland China. *Yilin* is the only journal profitable enough to have grown into a fully fledged publishing house. In 1988, Yilin Publishers began large-scale book publication of foreign literatures, and it is now arguably the most lucrative publisher of foreign literatures in the Mainland. Its leading titles include works by J.K. Rowling and Bill Clinton. Its annual production is over 800 new titles and over two million Chinese dollars (RMB). Given its impact on readership and market, the best-seller list of this publisher is indicative of the latest trends of world literature reading in the Chinese context. In October 2010, the top three titles were Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, and an illustrated *Tom Sawyer* for children. According to Zhang Yu, chief editor of *Yilin*, the success of the journal is closely linked to "the accumulated history of world literature," the "overall rise of quality of Chinese readers," the "betterment of the publishing environment" in China, and an "increase of international exchange" (Zhang 2010: 411). *Yilin*'s role in spreading world literature in Mainland China has been further secured with its series "Classics of Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Award-winning Foreign Literature."

The earliest systematic book series of world literature in China was started by the Shanghai Life Bookshop (Shanghai Shenghuo Shudian) in 1935, and entitled "The World's Literary Collection" (*Shijie Wenku*). Its chief editor Zheng Zhenduo, an accomplished writer-scholar himself, took an anthropological view on reading world literature. In the Preface, he writes,

> Literary classics are the highest achievement of the human race. … The contribution made to humanity by great writers cannot be fully expressed by words. … Literary classics are testimony of great writers using the magic of words to create phenomenal, everlasting works of imagination. Such creative works are the most real, most lively record of human lives. … Introducing and reading literary classics of the world is thus the biggest responsibility, rights and pleasures of our generation.
>
> (Quoted in Chen 1989: 282–83)

The editorial board included over one hundred writers and translators. During 1935–36, the series published over a hundred well-known titles from the Soviet Union, France, the USA, the UK, Spain, Greece, Norway, Germany, Poland, Belgium, and Italy (Chen 1989: 284).

Two translators left permanent marks on the dissemination of foreign literature in China: Lin Shu and Liang Qichao. Lin Shu (1852–1924) was instrumental in popularizing the romantic novel. His rendition of Alexander Dumas *fils*'s *La Dame aux Camélias* was the first European "classic" in Chinese. Lin Shu knew no foreign languages himself, but he worked with collaborators to turn Western literary classics into Chinese, using the classical styles of *chuanqi* (Tang dynasty) and *ci* (Song dynasty). His translations were hugely popular, putting generations of Chinese readers under the spell of Western literature. In a time when Chinese readers were not enthusiastic about foreign literature, Lin Shu bridged the gap by noticing the similarities in structuring principles and techniques between the works by Dickens, Scott, Stowe, Rider Haggard, etc., and the masterpieces of Chinese narrative such as *Records of the Grand Historian* and *The Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*. "Unlike his contemporaries who often looked down upon foreign literatures, Lin Shu at least admitted their merits and regarded them as equals" (Fong 1995: 584).

Liang Qichao (1873–1929), an advocate of reforming the Chinese mentality by reforming fiction, illustrates how foreign literature is given a different spin when entering China. In his lifetime, Chinese modernity was developing in earnest, and much Western knowledge and literature entered China. A major route for China to learn from the West was through Japanese translation (Liu 1995). Japan, which used to follow Chinese models, was now in a more advanced stage of modernization. This was a dramatic reversal. In 1896, only thirteen Chinese students were sent to study in Japan by the late Qing government, but the figure rose to about 1,000 in 1903 and to some 8,000 two years later (Ma 1995: 383). Like many other Chinese students, Liang Qichao was exposed to Western and revolutionary thought while in Japan. This experience mobilized him to use literature for the revolutionary cause. He founded the literary journal *New Fiction* as a vehicle to transform the minds of his fellow countrymen. As Ma Zuyi has said,

> In his articles, Liang stressed the importance of fiction-writing and translating while overstating the significance of "political fiction". His opinion found an echo in the men of letters at that time. Through the language they learned, the Chinese students in Japan had access to the Western literature which had been translated into Japanese since the Meiji Restoration, and to the "political fiction" written by Japanese authors.
>
> (Ma 1995: 384)

Liang's pragmatic approach to translation can be illustrated by his translation of Morita Omonoki's Japanese translation of Jules Verne's adventure tale *Deux Ans de Vacances* (Two Years' Vacation, 1888/1889), in which a group of schoolboys make a life for themselves when shipwrecked on a South Seas island. Following Morita, Liang's translation was only half the length of the original. The purpose was to feed Chinese readers with new, revolutionary ideas, even as translators also imposed elements of Chinese culture onto translated literature, "appending such moral norms as loyalty and filial piety" (Fong, 1995: 585).

One contemporary of Lin Shu and Liang Qichao was the prolific translator Yan Fu, whose elaborated translations of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* (1898) and Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1902) were significant inspirations for the literati class in modern China. His coinage of new vocabulary in law, sociology, and social sciences, combined with his lyrical narratives in classical Chinese, made new concepts such as Darwinism and the free market appealing to pioneering intellectual reformers.

The teaching of world literature in China today is characterized by bureaucratic intervention. In 1997, the State Council and the Ministry of Education decided to combine "Comparative Literature" with "World Literature" to form one subject subsidiary to the Chinese language and literature department. (See Zhang 2008 for a defense of this policy.) In 1998, a government document stated that "comparative literature and world literature" should be a "key subject" mandatory for students majoring in Han Chinese literature. The Ministry of Teachers' Education also added this subject in career development courses for teachers of primary and secondary schools. Consequently, many Chinese departments rushed to restructure syllabi, teaching facilities and training (Chen 2005). Most newly formed institutes of comparative literature and world literature in China are found in "normal universities" (those specializing in teacher training). Some polytechnics, science, and technological universities have also started comparative literature courses to give students a taste of the humanities. The Ministry of Education endorses two textbooks on the subject: Chen, Sun, and Xie (1997), and Yang (2002). According to a survey in 2006, over 50 percent of schools used one of these two books.

The academic study of foreign literatures was until recently a neglected area in China. Yang Zhouhan, a distinguished scholar of comparative literature, remarked in 1989 that the Chinese "often treat foreign literature as an object of study, just similar to the way natural scientists treat their objects of study. There is a clear divide between foreign literature and Chinese literature" (Yang 1989: 1). Yang was concerned about the lack of intention to study the organic relationship between foreign literatures and Chinese literature. At present, the language in which world literature

is taught and read in Mainland China is largely Chinese, and Chinese authors and literary critics also rely heavily on translation. Peking University is one of the few exceptions, teaching comparative literature and world literature with a required foreign language element.

By virtue of shared language and cultural heritage, Taiwan and Hong Kong both fall within the larger tradition of Chinese literature. Meanwhile, their colonization periods (Taiwan as Japanese colony 1895–1945; Hong Kong as British colony 1842–1997) have fundamentally affected their respective literary development. When compared with Mainland Chinese literature in contemporary times, the literatures of Taiwan and Hong Kong have experienced far greater exchange with world literatures. Living in a melting pot of both native and foreign cultural elements, writers in those two territories work against a multicultural, multilingual backdrop. Taiwanese literature embodies an entanglement of Chinese and Japanese aesthetics, whereas Hong Kong literature highlights the tension or fusion of the East meeting the West. The presence of multilingual words and expressions in a literary text, which is becoming increasingly common in Taiwan and Hong Kong literatures, demonstrates how writers of those territories live in and between different worlds. Their output necessarily incorporates the world in literary creations different from those of their Mainland Chinese counterparts. They present innovative means of "the local" incorporating "the foreign," thus situating "world literature" in the Chinese context from critical new perspectives.

Writers of the Chinese diaspora, especially first-generation migrant writers such as Gao Xingjian (Nobel laureate 2000), Liu Hong, Xiaolu Guo, and Shan Sa, who live abroad and write in either Chinese or Western languages, often write about Chinese subjects or about being Chinese abroad. Their works, like those by earlier writers (Lin Yutang and Xiao Qian being two key examples), are part and parcel of the larger corpus of "Chinese" literature. Their engagement with world literature, as informed readers and active contributors, enriches and challenges our assessment of China's literary relationship with the world.

## Japan

One may start with China when thinking about world literature in Japan. As Japanese sinologist Sanetō Keishū notes,

> Generally speaking, Japanese literature has been influenced by Chinese literature in the past millennia. The period between the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 and the Anti-Japanese War of 1937 is one when Japanese literature made an impact on Chinese literature. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, Chinese literature began to influence Japanese literature again.
>
> (Quoted in Ma and Ren, 2003: 558–59)

The Japanese have shown exceptional devotion to the study of Chinese literature, history, philosophy, and institutions. Historical narratives of Japan have been nurtured or enriched by Chinese (literary) norms, and Chinese literature acted as a

blueprint for Japanese literature. Traditional Japanese education required that the students possess a sound knowledge of classical Chinese literature, and the Confucian ethos significantly shaped the spiritual and moral making of Japan. Official documents in pre-modern Japan were written in classical Chinese. The songs and poems in *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, dating from the early eighth century), the oldest extant chronicle in Japan, were written in a combination of Chinese and phonetic transcription of Japanese (primarily for names and songs). The *Nihon Shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*, finished in 720), the second oldest book of classical Japanese history, was also written in classical Chinese.

During the Edo period (1603–1868), when early modern Japanese fiction was developed, its greatest influence came from Chinese vernacular fiction. Published between 1689 and 1692, the fifty-volume Japanese translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*The Three Kingdoms*, originally published in the fourteenth century, authorship traditionally attributed to Luo Guanzhong), was a popular success, first among the upper class and later with the general public. Other classical Chinese vernacular novels, such as *The Water Margin* (mid-fourteenth century), *The Story of the Stone* (first circulation 1759), and *Monkey* (sixteenth century), inspired the new genre *yomihon*, historical romances written almost entirely in prose. Representative authors include Tsuga Teisho, Takebe Ayatari, and Okajima Kanzan.

The impact of Chinese literature on Japanese literature is multi-layered. Adaptations and rewritings based on Chinese sources were common practice. For example, the trilogy *Stories to Awaken the World* (Feng 1610), compiled by the famous vernacular novelist Feng Menglong (1574–1646) of the Ming dynasty, was introduced into Japan in the Edo period. This work has been compared to Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the stories of *The Thousand and One Nights*. In 1749, Tsuga Teisho (1718–94?) adapted nine of Feng Menglong's stories in his collection *Strange Tales Old and New: A Wreath of Heroes*. In the Preface, Teisho "remarks that in an effort to echo the stylistic qualities of his Chinese models, with their mix of vernacular and classical elements, and to separate his work from other *sōshi*, which he thinks are entertaining but vulgar, he has chosen to write using what he terms an 'elegant' style" (cited in Washburn 2005: 57). Teisho's adaption of the story "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" from Feng Menglong's trilogy would later inspire Mori Ōgai (1862–1922), a pioneer of modern Japanese romanticism who was also influenced by his experiences as a student in Europe, to write *Maihime* (The Dancing Girl, 1890).

The historical Chinese influence on the evolution of the Japanese mind is key to our understanding of Japan's reception of foreign literature. As Spae (1942: 214) put it, "A host of Japanese scholars of the Tokugawa period were able to develop an exquisite taste for things Chinese to a degree which the West has never known." Of all countries outside China, Japan is the one that has translated the most Chinese texts. One of the most translated Chinese works, of all genres, is the fourteenth-century *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Based on historical facts of the founding of the Han dynasty, *The Three Kingdoms* is probably the best-known Chinese story in East Asia. Its widespread circulation embeds a Chinese tradition of the intellectual writer's entanglement with history and politics. The story has been translated, rewritten, and reproduced in different shapes and forms in Japan ever since the seventeenth century. *Journey to the West* (*Monkey*,

1590s), was made available in Japanese in 1758, about a century before the novel's entry into the West. The fruitful research of Japanese sinologists on the compilation and editions of this novel is indicative of the significant contributions of Japanese scholarship in Chinese literary history.

The influence of China on Japan can be exemplified in the case of John Bunyan's (1628–88) novel *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). It was first translated into Chinese in 1869. It was soon circulated to Japan and the illustrations were done in a Chinese style. The narrative is one that "describes the foreign in the language of Chinese." The Japanese translation of the English poems is, typically, "full of Chinese flavor" (Ma and Ren, 2003: 537, citing Wang 1987).

Of all genres, poetry seems to be a lasting favorite. The oldest collection of Chinese poetry written by Japanese poets, *Kaifūsō* (Fond Recollections of Poetry), was produced in 751. The renowned Japanese sinologist Yoshigawa Kōziro (1904–80) pays tribute to Chinese Tang poet Du Fu (712–70) with the remark that "Du's artistic achievement is supreme and above all others. His couplets are especially magical. He puts Goethe and Dante in the shadow. When the Old Testament is put alongside Du Fu's poetry, it appears like a baby's work" (Ma and Ren, 2003: 555). Yoshigawa's judgment might be contested, but the quote shows us the admiration a Japanese specialist could have for Chinese literature.

Lu Xun (1881–1936), "father of the modern Chinese novel," represents the dynamic interchange between China, Japan, and the wider world. His early period of study in Japan was decisive in forming the international perspective that informed his key role in the modernizing May Fourth movement, and throughout his life he was a prolific translator, both from Japanese and from German. Most famously, he wrote his seminal story "A Madman's Diary" (Kuángrén Rìjì, 1918) shortly after translating Nikolai Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" from Japanese into Chinese. Conversely, his own influence soon spread back to Japan. Within less than a week of his death, a Japanese publisher began to compile a full collection of his works, published in 1937. In the 1950s, Japan saw a high tide of translating Lu Xun, and a twenty-volume collection of Lu Xun's writings, translated by over fifty translators in four years, was published between 1983 and 1987 (Ma and Ren, 2003: 564–65; 567). Oe Kenzaburo, the 1994 Nobel Laureate in Literature, names Lu Xun as a favorite amongst intellectuals in postwar Japan (Zheng, 1991: 218). Meanwhile, modern Japanese literature also comes under the influence of Anglo-European cultures. Free verse enriches the poetic repertoire, and novelists are most apt in assimilating Western literary conventions and techniques. Shiga Naoya, the so-called "god of the novel," and Mori Ōgai are the best examples in the early twentieth century.

The many worlds incorporated in Japanese literature are in tune with its internationalization in the postwar period. For a start, women writers emerge as an important group in terms of both quantity and quality: "Both the 1960s and 1970s are remarkable in particular for an extraordinary variety of writing by women" (Morris, 1996: 269). American minimalist writers such as Raymond Carver were in vogue in the 1980s, partly thanks to translations by the popular but controversial Japanese writer Haruki Murakami (b.1949). Avant-garde, surrealist, or psychodramatic works by Kōbō Abe (author of *Woman in the Dunes* in 1960), Yoshikichi Furui,

Banana Yoshimoto, or Haruki Murakami are testimony to the cross-cultural, East–West inbreeding mix of artistic fascinations.

## Korea

In the same vein as the Chinese have influenced Japanese thought, the educated and ruling class in Korea were proficient in Chinese characters (*hanja*) and studied (neo-)Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Chinese was the official language of Korea for over a millennium. "Classical" (or traditional) Korean literature refers to works written before the end of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). When *hangul*, modern Korean script, was invented under King Sejong the Great (1418–50), translations of Chinese works began to be made, even as original compositions (and particularly, versions of folk poetry and drama) began to be written. The Confucian canon "formed not only the basic curriculum of education for almost 1000 years, but the foundation for the civil service examination for 900 years (even when Buddhism was the state religion for more than seven centuries)" (Lee 2003: 5).

Following the Confucian literary hierarchy, poetry was given the highest regard. According to Ma and Ren (2003: 601), the most important Korean translation of Chinese poetry consisted of poems by Du Fu, which came out three hundred years before its Japanese counterpart. The next favorite genre is fiction. The first documented translation of a classical Chinese novel in Korean is *The Three Kingdoms*. Over the last two centuries, this novel has gone through numerous translations and adaptations in Korea. In 1884, the Korean emperor ordered several dozen literary scholars to translate nearly a hundred titles of fiction, including *The Three Kingdoms*, *The Story of the Stone*, and *Journey to the West*. Some of them were not, strictly speaking, novels, but became such through translation. Chinese folk drama, for example, was translated into Korean as the "dramatic novel."

Following the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, Korea was colonized by Japan, and European influence was on the rise at the same time. Modern Chinese literature was introduced into Korea through the works of Lu Xun, who remains the favorite Chinese writer for Koreans, and almost all of his works have been translated. In North Korea, a high tide of translating (Mainland) Chinese literature occurred in the 1950s (Ma and Ren 2003: 610).

## Conclusion

In his comprehensive study of Korean literature, Peter Lee observes that the influence of the Confucian political, historiographic, and moral tradition on East Asian literature was "pervasive" (Lee 2003: 5). This is a salient remark. I would argue that it is appropriate to start our conceptualization of "world literature" in East Asia with the "China factor." The universal reach of the Confucian tradition in China, Japan, and Korea "provided rhetorical commonplaces, inspired the 'mirror for princes' literature and other prose narratives – both official and popular – and allegorical

exegesis" (Lee 2003: 5). It was on the basis of such (quasi)Confucian models that the traditional literatures of East Asia were developed, with the primary features being a lack of distinction between historical and literary narratives, and a blurred boundary between the literati and the ruling class. In the national literatures of China, Japan, or Korea, "the use of mythological and historical personages from Chinese classics and histories was the common device of comparison and amplification in all genres, primary and secondary" (Lee 2003: 5).

For all their commonality, the characteristics of national East Asian literatures differently determined how they received foreign works. Before we can theorize "World Literature and East Asia," we need sufficient understanding of the texts, authors, norms, and traditions that underwrite East Asian literary histories. Only with extensive reading and a contextualized evaluative system of criticism can we begin to establish a rigorous analytical discourse on the subject. The dominance of English as the language of "world" literature and literary criticism excludes important scholarly works in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, which further sidelines contributions made by East Asian literary comparatists and historians. The circulation of foreign literatures in China, Japan, and Korea probably exceeds those in developed countries of the West by far – in terms of quantity at least, if not in quality as well. As Eugene Eoyang has said,

> It should not be assumed that English is the only language in which the world's literature can be subsumed. The Gorky Institute of World Literature has been in existence in Russia for more than half a century, and the concept of "world literature" has been familiar in Russian for at least that long; Japanese remains the language into which more foreign works are translated more quickly than any other, so Japanese may be regarded as a language particularly hospitable to world literature.
>
> (Eoyang 1994: 263)

Today, East Asian literatures are read and also written around the world. Hong Kong's best-known writer, Jin Yong (Louis Cha, b.1924), is a household name in Chinese communities around the world. His martial arts novels stand the test of time and remain popular to both serious and general readers. He once commented that martial arts fiction is hugely popular because it "is a Chinese genre. And Chinese, of course, like to read Chinese genres" (quoted in Bailey 1996: 99). The genre of martial arts novels has not been well served in translations into Western languages, although it is much better received in East Asia. This is not unrelated to the appeal of action and battle scenes in traditional Chinese novels, such as *The Three Kingdoms* or *The Water Margin* in East Asia.

As East Asia – represented by China, Japan, and Korea – continues to develop in the twenty-first century, the question of world literature looms larger than ever for publishers and scholars alike. While it is likely that non-Asian writers will continue to be translated into Asian languages in substantial numbers, the region's rich and complex cultural heritage will ensure that East Asian readers' ideas of what constitutes "world literature" will remain significantly different from those of readers of Western languages.

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# 48
# CONSTRUCTIONS OF WORLD LITERATURE IN COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

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## I

Until the end of the eighteenth century, Indian critical-theoretical discourse was chiefly concerned with two all-inclusive categories of literature, *marga* and *deshi*. In intricate developments spanning the previous thousand years, amounting to an Indian battle of the books, *marga* had come to characterize the entire body of verbal representation, music, dance, theater, and other arts – their theory and their practice – in the classical canon of Sanskrit-centered culture. In contrast, *deshi* had come to signify the non-canonical and post-classical arts, centered on new mother tongues (including non-Indo-European ones), and formed in the interstices of the trans-local, subcontinent-wide domain of Sanskrit. In Sheldon Pollock's terms, *marga*, meaning path or way (and very close to Greek *methodos*, "following the way"), designated the normative traditions, methods, modes, and figuratively spatialized stylistic dispositions of cosmopolitan Sanskritic culture; whereas *deshi*, meaning of the land, country, province, or region, denoted the literary and aesthetic practices of indigenous, regionalized, or localized vernacular places (Pollock 2006: 10–30, 204–22). In this self-essentializing Hindu perspective, all *sahitya* or literature was classified as either *marga* or *deshi*, with no room for elements originating outside *Bharatavarsha*, the conceptually closed geographical and cultural realm of what we now call the Indian subcontinent.

In the nineteenth century, the dynamics of *marga* and *deshi* were transmuted irreversibly by two substantively reconfigured spatial master-concepts, *vishwa* and *rashtra*, both from Sanskrit and with pre-classical and classical etymologies. *Vishwa*, meaning the entire enchanted universe (to use Max Weber's vocabulary) was resemanticized in Bengali, Hindi, and Marathi, among other languages, specifically to denote the disenchanted world, the contemporaneous cosmopolitical order of nations and places around the planet (Cascardi 1992: 16). *Rashtra*, a technical term in ancient

epic-political and legal discourse variably meaning territory, country, kingdom, empire, and the people or subjects of a realm, became the realigned signifier of choice for the modern *nation* (Apte 1890; Prasad et al. 1989; Joshi 1982). By the middle of the nineteenth century, and especially after the Indian-British war of 1857, *vishwa sahitya*, world literature, and *rashtriya sahitya*, national literature, became pre-emergent or emergent categories, in Raymond Williams's sense, explicitly representing formative Indian "structures of feeling," or what was "actually being lived" at the moment on the subcontinent (Williams 1977: 131; Dharwadker 2009).

The formation of these new categories was not an inertial shift in Indian consciousness, or even a behavioristic response to Western ideas, but the conceptual correlate of a large-scale material or infrastructural transformation centered on the print medium, among other factors. The depth and scope of the transformation may be indexed by two small synecdoches. In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the subcontinent consolidated an extensive print culture of its own, which proved to be "the first fully formed print culture to appear outside Europe and North America," as well as the most multilingual print culture in the world; between 1800 and 1840, just the Serampore Mission Press near Calcutta, for example, "printed 212,000 items in forty languages, including books in thirty Indian languages and dialects, as well as books in Arabic, Armenian, Burmese, Chinese, Javanese, Malay, Maldivian, Persian, Singapuri, and Thai" (Dharwadker 1997: 111). And, by the mid-nineteenth century, British India had begun to witness "the virtually ceaseless circulation and consumption of print and textuality," in which "the export of books and printed matter from Britain to India" – then comprising about 95 percent of the print trade into the colony – "doubled in value from £148,563 in 1850 to £313,772 in 1863–64," while the annual budget for English education in India, following Macaulay's Minute of 1835, stood still at £10,000 (Joshi 2002: 35, 39, 41). Thus, by the beginning of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's literary career in the mid-1860s, for example, the voluminous circulation of texts from different parts of India and the world had become a fact of everyday life in the colonial sphere of print and the urban Indian market-place (Chatterjee 1996; Mukherjee 2000: chs. 1–2; Joshi 2002: ch. 4).

Against this backdrop, for twentieth-century Indians, *vishwa sahitya* came to denote the literature of the world, where *vishwa* as qualifier signifies world-wide as well as universal. The phrase thus represents *sahitya* that is *vishwatmaka* or universal in disposition, an immense gathering or intertexture of works and discourses whose self-identity or "shaping soul" is universality (Frye 1957; Pollock 2006: 3). The universality of such literature is its *vishwatmakta* – which, in turn, generates *vishwatmaktavada* in the twentieth century, the principal Indian term for cosmopolitanism. *Vishwa sahitya* is thus, at once, world literature, universal literature, universalistic literature, and cosmopolitan literature.

In its multivalent sense, *vishwa sahitya* then distinguishes itself systematically from three contraries: (1) *deshi*, the set of India's post-classical literatures in various local or regional mother tongues; (2) *rashtriya sahitya*, India's national literature, in the formal languages proper to the nation; and (3) *marga*, classical Sanskrit lyric or *kavya*, canonized long before the birth of the modern nation. In this fourfold hierarchy, the pre-modern *marga–deshi* binary arises authochthonously in India between the seventh and fourteenth centuries, but closely parallels the antithesis between Latin and the European vernaculars in, say, Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (1304–7;

Pollock 2006: ch. 11). In contradistinction, the *vishwa–rashtra* opposition arises in India explicitly within the framework of "the lived experience of cultural difference in the colonial encounter" with Europe, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and contemporaneously translates – as we might say now, with hindsight – the interplay between the Kantian cosmopolitical and the Romantic national (Dharwadker 2003, 2009; Kant 1983; Cheah 1998).

## II

The constructions of literature embedded in the category of *vishwa sahitya* begin to surface in Indian belletristic criticism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In a lecture on "The Literature of the Bengali People," delivered at the 1895 annual meeting of the Literary Council of Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) observes that

> The word *sahitya* comes from *sahit*. Hence, … we find in the word *sahitya* the idea of union. It is not simply a union of idea and idea, language and language, book and book: nothing except *sahitya* or literature can establish deeply intimate ties between one person and another, between past and present, between far and near. The people of a country deficient in literature have no vital bonds to join them: they remain isolated.
>
> (Tagore 1919a: 179)

This formulation prefigures Indocentric thinking about literature over the next century, but it is cryptic and requires explication. Parallel to its English counterpart "together," *sahit* in Sanskrit and the later Indo-Aryan languages serves as both postposition and adjective, ranging in meanings from "with" and "along with" to the abstractly conceived condition of a thing that is together, associated, or united with another thing, or a thing that is accompanied or attended by something else. Derived from *sahit* as an abstract noun, *sahitya* then represents a plurality of interlinked objects, or their condition of mutual accompaniment, association, togetherness, unification, or union. The word thus refers to a set of objects in their interrelatedness, or – if we borrow a term from Shelley – their *intertexture*.

Classical Sanskrit does not always specify what objects *sahitya* conceptually interconnects, or how, but poetics after the seventh century generally assumes that it brings together poet (*kavi*) and sympathetic respondent (*sahridaya*), existentially experienced feeling (*bhava*) and aesthetically represented emotion (*rasa*), as well as poetic imagination (*pratibha*) and textual figuration (*alamkara*) (Apte 1890; Dimock et al. 1974). In a brief essay on "Indian Poetics" (1974), A.K. Ramanujan augments this perception by noting that

> The word means "joined together," and literature is thus a togetherness of word and meaning. It is on the relationships possible between word (*sabda*) and sense (*artha*) that all utterance is classified. … But the type of utterance that interested the poeticians most is that in which neither word nor sense is self-important, where both are indispensable because *together they serve the overall structure*. This is the joining which is called *sahitya*.
>
> (Ramanujan 1974: 114; emphasis added)

While Ramanujan develops a structuralist interpretation of Sanskrit theory that keeps the significations of *sahitya* within the circumference of language and textuality, Tagore adopts a more open – and radical – approach in his lecture. Literature's intertexture is not only between "idea and idea, language and language, book and book," but also between the literary and the non-literary. *Sahitya* among the arts, in fact, carries the unique power of connection that can "establish deeply intimate ties between one person and another, between past and present, between far and near." Tagore's reference to intimate ties seems to invoke, on the one hand, the Western conception of literature as a site of ethical engagement and potential friendship between writer and reader; and, on the other hand, the canonical Sanskrit conception of the ideal reader of a text as a *sahridaya*, a responsive connoisseur who is "one at heart" with its author (Dimock et al. 1974: 221). If this grounds the literary in the ethical outside literature, then the connectivity between past and present ties literature to time and external history, whereas the intertexture of far and near situates *sahitya* in space and extra-literary geography.

Tagore's stance in this passage foreshadows (or even serves as a *figura* for) Erich Auerbach's position, in his 1952 essay "Philology and World Literature," that literature is the self-expression of human interiority, and since that interiority and its self-expression unfold in history – which includes "not only the past" but also "the present" – the task of philology, "a historicist discipline" guided by a "historicist humanism," is to recover the "inner history of mankind," which is "the history of mankind achieving self-expression" (Auerbach 1952: 4–5; also Auerbach 1953: 73). Both Tagore and Auerbach, writing more than fifty years apart, echo Goethe from the 1820s, for whom, as Miriam and Edward Said note, *Weltliteratur* stands "for universal literature, or literature which expresses *Humanität*, humanity, and this expression is literature's ultimate purpose" (Auerbach 1952: 1). Moreover, Tagore's final sentence in his passage, that "The people of a country deficient in literature have no vital bonds to join them: they remain isolated," in part anticipates Benedict Anderson's argument nearly ninety years later, that print, text, and reading – from newspapers to novels – together create the "imagined community" of the nation. Tagore's interpretation of the "union" implicit in *sahitya* thus links literature within itself to networks of ideas, languages, and texts, and also connects outside itself to human interiority and imagination, time and history, geography and space, as well as community and nation. What is distinctive about *sahitya* in such a perspective is that, unlike the Latinate term "literature," it does not assign a constitutive role to the letter, the written word, or writing. Indian literatures have been written in a dozen different script-systems for over two millennia now, but *sahitya* and its intertextures are not merely literal.

## III

Conceived this way, *sahitya* becomes the screen on which the modern Indian globalizing imagination projects its pictures of the world. In a 1907 lecture astonishingly titled "World Literature," Tagore told the National Council of Education in Calcutta that "*Comparative Literature* is the English title you have given [me] … to discuss,"

but "in Bengali, I shall call it *vishwa sahitya*, World Literature" (Tagore 1919b: 138). Unaware of the few books then available in a "discipline yet to take root in the West and almost unheard of at the time in India," as Sisir Kumar Das and Sukanta Chaudhuri observe (Tagore 2001: 376), Tagore says little in this lecture about literature, but offers an extended theory of the world and what it means to be human in it. For him, all human faculties exist "for the sole purpose of forging bonds with others," and the outcome of such interrelations is "knowing others as our own, and ourselves as other" (Tagore 1919b: 138–39). If human desire is defined by the fact that "I desire that in which I realise my own self more comprehensively," then "It is natural that through sight, hearing, and thought, through the play of the imagination and the attachments of the heart, … [m]y soul finds fulfilment in all humanity" (139–40). As "Human self-expression in the world follows two broad courses" – one of which is labor, and the other literature – "We must read history and literature to know humanity as revealed in these two currents" (142). When we follow "the course of human intention through all history," we come to see "the whole of literature surrounding the whole of humanity," and understand that "the material being of the human race [expressed in its labor] has extended itself far in every direction through the agency of its conceptual being [expressed in literature]" (148–49).

In *Ghare bhaire* (1915–16), his most famous novel – the title of which is best rendered as *At Home and Outside* – Tagore offers a cartography in which the individual self or soul stands at the conceptual center, and is surrounded, in concentric circles, by its consciousness, its body, and its home and intimate sphere; and then, outside the boundary wall of its household economy, successively by village or city, district, province, nation, continent, and world (Tagore 1919c; Sen 2004; Ray 1984). Across these multiple domains distinguished by their different social protocols, the "consubstantiality" of their souls (a term that I borrow from Ramanujan 1999: 121) gives human beings their common humanity, which is the object that literature ultimately addresses. Grounding his view in the metaphysics of the Upanishads, but also aligning it closely (through Rammohun Roy and the Brahmo Samaj) with Unitarianism and the theological principle of universalism in Christianity, Tagore thus frames his conception of world literature with a universal spiritual humanism (Kopf 1979). Tagore injects a distinctively Indian concept of the *atman* (self, spirit, or soul) into the equation here, but his humanism is not far from Goethe's "deep humanism," in which, as Hans Kohn notes, "The individual's highest goal … [is to] achieve consciousness of himself as part of the whole, not of a national whole, but of the whole of humankind" (Eckermann 1964: xii, xi).

## IV

In the post-Independence decades, A.K. Ramanujan (1929–93), a bilingual poet and fiction writer in English and Kannada – and the only multilingual translator and scholar of world stature among modern Indian writers so far – sought to systematically displace the kind of unqualified universalism and transcendental spiritualism that Tagore invented. For Ramanujan, a professional linguist, every language, and correspondingly every literature, historical period, and cultural formation, has its

own inner logic, grammar, poetics, and rhetoric, which embody their users' shared immanent reasoning about the world they find, construct, and inhabit. Every immanently reasoned or reasonable world view, as represented in a literature, can be translated into any other reasonable world view, no matter how wide the gap between the inner logics of the two cultures, without resorting to a transcendent spirit or abstract rationality. Every language, literature, or culture is thus unique and, at the same time, potentially translatable into the immanent reasoning of any other language, literature, or culture (Dharwadker 1994). Distancing himself apparently from both Kant's *a priori* and Hegel's Absolute, Ramanujan invokes a position that is closer to Jonathan Swift's, in which human beings are not "rational" creatures but nevertheless are capable of "reason." In a late essay called "Some Thoughts on 'Non-Western' Classics" (1994), he therefore argues that

> A literary classic *does* express a whole community over a long time, forms its values and enacts its conflicts in a language *of its own*. Yet it [also] … belongs to *anyone* who wishes to work towards understanding and experiencing it. To question the possibility of such understanding, admittedly difficult, partial, and requiring effort, is to question the *human* enterprise and condemn ourselves to self-regarding prisons of solipsism. We need to attend carefully both to the uniqueness of cultural expression as well as to the universal elements in it, both to its specificity and its accessibility, both to its otherness and its challenge to our ability to share it.
>
> (Ramanujan 2004: 117; emphases added)

In Ramanujan's globalizing imagination, language (rather than soul or spirit) is the connective tissue of the world; but it is, as he says elsewhere, a "permeable membrane," and therefore divides even as it connects. His construction of world literature is also underwritten by humanism, but it is a circumscribed humanism in which universalism and relativism interactively curtail each other. As also for Goethe (whom he does not cite), for Ramanujan the point of constructing a universal frame of reference is not to homogenize culture, but precisely to experience human diversity, and to let it speak freely for itself.

If Tagore and Ramanujan both work with a paradigm of fixities – fixed locations, fixed identities, fixed populations – Salman Rushdie (b.1947) construes the human world primarily through the lens of migration. As he says in an early essay on Gunter Grass,

> The very word *metaphor*, with its roots in the Greek word for *bearing across*, describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants – borne-across humans – are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples.
>
> (Rushdie 1985: xii)

In *The Satanic Verses* (1988), perhaps the most concentrated abstraction of an entire library of world literature in the novel form, Rushdie expands this insight to create a

thorough intertexture of migration, metaphor, translation, metamorphosis, and transmigration (Dharwadker 2008). In his own words, "If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's-eye-view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity." As he goes on to say, this coalescence generates "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs … *Melange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world. … " (Rushdie 1990: 394; emphasis in original). As it is fleshed out in his wide-ranging critical writings, Rushdie's general position, like Tagore's, is also an unrestricted universal humanism, but, unlike Tagore's, it is deeply modernist, secular, and socialist in its commitments (*Imaginary Homelands*; *Step Across*). Distinguishing himself tacitly from both Tagore and Ramanujan – neither of whom he cites – Rushdie relocates universal humanism from what Arjun Appadurai calls "a world of structures and other stable forms" to "a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion," whether they are "ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, [or] technologies and techniques" (Appadurai 2001: 5). As Appadurai goes on to observe, "This is a world of flows," and, as Rushdie puts it in *Midnight's Children*, it is a world in which people, books, things, realities, and literatures constantly "leak" into each other.

## V

As self-reflexive writers at work in an international literary market for most of their careers, Tagore, Ramanujan, and Rushdie represent the evolution of Indian conceptions of world literature over a century, defining three exemplary moments – the late colonial, the early postcolonial, and the late postcolonial. Tagore opens the door for his contemporaries and successors by establishing a spiritual basis for a global order of literatures and cultures, but, like many late-colonial writers in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, he anchors his vision firmly to his own nation-yet-to-be. Ramanujan's posthumous *Collected Poems* (1995) and *Collected Essays* (1999) give us glimpses of a new and different sort of globalizing imagination, in which the writer's own self as well as the characters who speak in his texts are no longer tethered to a single national landscape, but begin to traverse the world at large, inhabiting all the planet's continents even as the continents come to inhabit them. In a late poem called "In March," for example, the poet – confined to bed by a high fever – travels, "not by train or bus or plane," but through his own bloodstream, which is as "warm as the ocean current / that took Aztecs to Mexico"; and discovers, almost in a state of hallucination, that "Red-hot fish," whales in "white heat," and "cool silver dolphins"

> swam all around me
> in that gulf stream
> circling my continents

through the stillness of icebergs
and sleepless oceans.

I never knew that my Amazon
flows savage and treacherous
through my Africas. …

(Ramanujan 1995: 238)

But even for Ramanujan, who settled in the United States in his thirties, nation and "home" in India remain recurrent points of reference and origin, since "living / among relations / binds the feet" (Ramanujan 1995: xxxiii). In contrast, Rushdie's diasporic fiction and criticism – after the national allegories of *Midnight's Children* (1980) and *Shame* (1983) – push the transformation initiated by Tagore to its logical extreme, leaving the writer and his characters free to roam the earth as they please, with no national or even historical constraints on their filiations, affiliations, and identities.

To label these as "Indian" conceptions of world literature, however, is paradoxically to reinsert the nation into a process that is transnational in its beginnings as well as ends, and hence to falsify it. In their respective versions of the globalizing imagination, all three writers are thoroughgoing and self-consistent, "worlding" the category of literature itself, so that it no longer matters when, where, how, with what, and why a modern writer writes. Their conceptualizations of the world and world literature, in fact, are intricately enmeshed with elements far beyond the borders of any one nation or national tradition. In Tagore's case, the combination of universalism and humanism that underpins his work arises from a much wider circuit of ideas than the "Hindu-Brahmo" spiritualism in which he often situated himself. As Martha Nussbaum suggests in her landmark essay on "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" (1994), this universal humanism is actually a (re)-invention of cosmopolitanism as such, so that "Tagore's ideal" of "the person whose allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings" remains the only alternative to "patriotic pride," which is "morally dangerous," even in our own times (Nussbaum 1994: 15, 4). On the basis of her work on "international quality-of-life issues in an institute for development economics connected with the United Nations," in fact, she boldly concludes that the cosmopolitanism of Tagore – as also of his fictional character Nikhil, the protagonist of *At Home and Outside*, which tells "a story of education for world citizenship" – "can be successfully realized in schools and universities in democracies around the world, and in the formation of public policy" on a global scale (Nussbaum 1994: 4, 15–16). Although much of Tagore's humanism is grounded in a specifically Indian concept of self or spirit, a significant part of his universalism – in his account of world literature – finds its philosophical moorings in a cosmopolitanism that is, by definition, transnational.

Along parallel lines, Ramanujan and Rushdie in their distinct ways suggest strongly that the humanism necessary to underwrite world literature need not be located in something "spiritual" or merely Indian. As writers who have adopted explicitly secular, and agnostic or even atheistic, positions at particular points in

their careers, they belong to two successive literary generations influenced deeply by existentialism, as it became a cross-cultural force in the decades after Tagore's death. Their humanism owes as much, say, to Jean-Paul Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946) in postwar Europe, as to Jawaharlal Nehru's Fabian socialism and secular humanism in postcolonial India. In the absence of what David Farrell Krell calls "all otherworldly underpinnings," Sartre argues that "one must take subjectivity as one's point of departure"; and, as Krell goes on to note, for Sartre, "man's freedom to act is rooted in subjectivity, which alone grants man his dignity, so that the Cartesian *cogito* becomes the only possible *point de départ* for existentialism and *the only possible basis for a humanism*" (Krell 1993: 214–15; Sartre 1947: 17, 93; final emphasis added).

Sartre's existentialism resonates broadly with Ramanujan and Rushdie, but it is not the only European parallel for their Nehruvian positions. Whether they use liberal, socialist, modernist, or postcolonial terms, their projections of humanism also conform to Martin Heidegger's account of the phenomenon – not in the "Letter on Humanism" (1947), which rejects Sartre's formulation and becomes a manifesto for post-humanism (or at least for what, in its own words, is "a curious kind of 'humanism'"), but rather in the less turbulent essay entitled "The Age of the World Picture" (1938–52). Adapting Jacob Burkhardt's nineteenth-century insight that the Renaissance creates a decisive rupture with ancient and medieval Europe by "inventing the individual," Heidegger argues in the latter piece that modernity begins when "man becomes subject" in the full sense of the term (both *subjectus* and *subjectum*), which means that "Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth" (Heidegger 1977: 128). Since modernity is characterized by what Max Weber describes as "the disenchantment of the world" (a position that Heidegger also borrows from Nietzsche before him), the combination of man as full subject and "the loss of the gods" (Heidegger 1977: 116) then gives birth to humanism. In this account, humanism is "nothing but *a moral-aesthetic anthropology*," where anthropology "designates that interpretation of man which explains and evaluates whatever is, in its entirety, *from the standpoint of man* and *in relation to man*" (Heidegger 1977: 133; emphasis added). Although neither Indian writer is sympathetic to the German philosopher, the phrases that I have highlighted in this sentence pinpoint precisely the philosophical principles – so different from Tagore's – that Ramanujan and Rushdie use when constructing their own transnational visions of world literature.

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# 49
# *THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS* AS WORLD LITERATURE

*Sandra Naddaff*

### *Alf Layla wa Layla:* l'original Arabe

"We need not alert the reader to the value and beauty of the stories included in this work," writes Antoine Galland in his 1704 preface to the first European translation of *Alf Layla wa Layla*. "They recommend themselves: you need only read them to agree that we've never seen anything of this kind, in any language, of such beauty" (Galland 1960: xxxi). *Alf Layla wa Layla, Les Mille et une nuits, The Thousand and One Nights:* the story of the stories told by Scheherazade over 1001 nights to Sultan Shahriyar, who, betrayed by his wife, nightly marries a virgin only to kill her the next morning. In introducing what would become one of the most productive and generative translations in literary history, Galland gestures towards the potential of world literature to open up a space in which negotiations can take place among individual works of literature and the literary cultures within which they are located. If *Alf Layla wa Layla*, the work variously known in English translation as the *1001 Nights* or the *Arabian Nights,* reflects on fundamental questions about the nature of narrative, it is equally a work that speaks directly to the potential of a foundational literary text fearlessly to cross borders and boundaries of all sorts: generic, formal, linguistic, and national. Perhaps no other work of world literature holds up as clear a mirror to the way a text can simultaneously be identified wholly with a literary culture and yet circulate well beyond that culture, than does this foundational text of Arabic narrative.

In its earliest embodiment, *Alf Layla wa Layla* already reflects on the potential of a work to be transported and translated across cultures and languages. The Arabic text itself tells that *Alf Layla* was not, in its original incarnation, an "Original Arabic" work, as Galland proclaims (Galland 1960: xxxi). The frame narrative, which is central to the narrative structure of the *1001 Nights*, reflects Indian heritage. The Sindbad story is found in the Greek oral narrative tradition; the story of Aladdin locates its hero in China; and the names of the main characters of the work – Shahrazad, Shahriyar, Dunyazad, and Shah Zaman – remind us that the work lived for a time in

Persia. Indeed, the earliest extended reference to the work by the tenth-century Arab historian al-Mas'udi proposes that the Arabic text derived from a Persian work known as *Hazar Afsana* (*A Thousand Tales*).

This Persian source suggests an Islamic backdrop against which many of the stories unfold. From its beginning, with the introductory invocation of Allah which is present in the earliest extant manuscript of the text, *Alf Layla* identifies itself as a text that is rooted in Islamic values and traditions, even as various story cycles pointedly subvert Islamic belief and practice. As Galland notes, this text delights not only because of the narrative pleasure it offers in its recounting of marvelous events, but in the instruction it gives about the "customs and manners of the Orientals, by their religious ceremonies both pagan and Muslim" (Galland 1960: xxxi–ii). In 1697, just seven years prior to the publication of the first volume of *Les Mille et une nuits*, Galland had completed the work of his friend Barthélemy d'Herbelot, the *Bibliothèque orientale, ou dictionnaire universel*, which, according to its subtitle, contained "tout ce qui regarde la connoissance des peoples de l'orient." In the same year, Charles Perrault published his *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, a collection of tales that also instructed even as they entertained. In offering the first volume of his translation of *Les Mille et une nuits* to the reading public in 1704, Galland implicitly brings this foundational text of Arabic literature and Islamic culture into dialogue with these textual predecessors, and generates a space in which the understanding and interrelation that defines the activity of world literature can occur.

## *Alf Layla* and the translators

In many ways, Galland's translation determines the parameters within which the *1001 Nights* as world literature has traveled. The title itself, *Les Mille et une nuits: contes arabes traduits en français* [The Thousand and One Nights: Arabic Tales Translated into French], reflects the work's potential for translation, to be moved from its "Original Arabic" into another language. Galland first discovered *Les Mille et une nuits* in 1701 in an isolated manuscript of the "Sindbad the Sailor" story, which did not belong to the original corpus of *Alf Layla* at all. Inspired by the success of his translation, he obtained a multi-volume manuscript from Syria, and began a translation of the full text, a task that would prove difficult as Galland confronted the indeterminate nature of the original text. This textual uncertainty would ultimately result in the false construction of a fixed text, the form of which would determine the shape in which the *1001 Nights* would be transmitted in translation until the end of the twentieth century, when Husain Haddawy published his translation of the *Arabian Nights* (1990), which included only the original core stories. Indeed, there is a certain irony in the fact that the work that introduced the *1001 Nights* to the West and that has, as a consequence, the status of an original, is textually illegitimate, since those cycles that are best known today and that are thought of as quintessentially *1001 Nights* material – cycles such as "Sindbad," "Aladdin" and "Ali Baba" – are not part of the original Arabic corpus of tales.

So immediate and pervasive were the popularity and influence in Europe of Galland's translation that, for almost a century, translations of this translation, and

not from the Arabic, were made into other European languages. By 1706, the work had been translated anonymously into English as the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*. Between 1712 and 1794, *Les Mille et une nuits* was translated into multiple European languages, including German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, and Flemish. Indeed, at one point Galland's French translation provided the text for *Alf Layla*'s retranslation into Arabic, offering an ironic manipulation of the process of literary and cultural repossession, an attempt on the part of the originating culture to reclaim ownership of this corpus of stories. This sustained translation activity also authenticates *Alf Layla wa Layla* as a work of world literature, one that depends upon translation and its passage in translation as the mode for its continued existence. Rather than serving as a marker of linguistic dispossession, translations of *Alf Layla wa Layla* early on function in service to what Walter Benjamin in "The Task of the Translator" would famously call its afterlife (Benjamin 1976: 71).

The great nineteenth-century English translations of the *Nights* follow Galland's lead in their reframing of the work, although they rely on the more elaborate Egyptian recensions of the text rather than the sparer Syrian tradition. The prefaces to the several translations, in particular, define the space in which the original text is received, and function as an alternative narrative structure within which this quintessential frame narrative can be reframed as necessary. Two translators are of particular note: Edward Lane, a great lexicographer and author of one of the inaugural works of modern ethnography in English, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptian*, first published *The Thousand and One Nights, commonly called, in England, The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*, between 1838 and 1840 in monthly installments, following the format of the serial publications popular at the time. Lane claims his authority as translator as one who has been received into Egyptian society "on terms of perfect equality" (Lane 1859: ix). It is on this basis that he defends his decision to "omit such tales, anecdotes, &c. as are comparatively uninteresting or on any account objectionable. … " (xvii).

Lane's authorial privilege extends to the structure of the work as well. He eliminates much of the poetry of the *Nights*, and, crucially, alters the fundamental narrative structure of the work by erasing the nightly interruptions (and implicit sexual activity) that determine the rhythm of Scheherazad's narrative. Of greatest significance, however, are the "copious notes" that Lane adds to render the translation "more intelligible and agreeable to the English reader" (xviii). Indeed, these notes are particularly indicated on the title page of the translation ("A New Translation from the Arabic, With Copious Notes") and were later collected by Lane's nephew, Stanley Lane-Poole, and published separately in 1883 in a volume entitled *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*. Much like the great Arabic-English lexicon on which Lane was working until his death, the footnotes, along with Lane's wood-cut engravings and the guide to pronunciation that closes the translator's preface, bear witness to the potential of a translation to fix a potentially threatening text and assimilate it within the receiving culture. In Lane's translation, the *1001 Nights* offers a work that controls through its extra-textual material the threat of radical otherness. In this context, the translated text becomes, among other things, a site for literary and cultural domestication.

The other great nineteenth-century English translation of *Alf Layla wa Layla* belongs to Sir Richard Burton, who relied heavily on the work of his compatriot,

John Payne. If Lane domesticates the *Nights* and sanitizes it by removing disturbing references and excesses in order to maintain it as another account of the manners and customs of the Egyptians, Burton amplifies the original text, indulging in extensive footnotes and commentary in which he focuses voyeuristically on the sexual practices of the Arabs. Burton's 1885–86 translation, printed by the Burton Club for private subscribers only, goes to great lengths to "foreignize" the text, in Lawrence Venuti's term (see Venuti in this volume), to mark the work as different linguistically, culturally, and ethically. He notes in his preface that his translation grew out of his pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, in which he entered the Muslim holy lands disguised as a believer, in violation of the prohibition against non-Muslim participation in the *hajj*. This "passing," possible in large part because of Burton's extraordinary linguistic skills, points to Burton's position as a translator who sees the possibility of translation as merging two distinct languages and cultures.

The end result of Burton's translation of *Alf Layla wa Layla* would be the production of "a full, complete, unvarnished, uncastrated copy of the great original," (Burton 1900: ix). Burton remarks his desire "to add something to his native tongue" (xiv) and acknowledges the benefits of conceptual, linguistic, and geographic difference. Yet even as he affirms the value of this difference, and implicitly privileges the power of a work that originates elsewhere to enlarge the perspective of the receiving culture by offering alternative modes of structuring the world, Burton ends his preface by relocating the reader, who was initially positioned at the outset of the Translator's Foreword in a romanticized Arabian landscape, to imperial England. In his "few final words," Burton reminds the private reader of his translation of what he has apparently forgotten: that England "is at present the greatest Mohammedan empire in the world" (xxiii). His translation of *Alf Layla wa Layla* will not only allow its readers to "become master of much more Arabic than the ordinary Arab owns," it will also give them the privileged and private religious, social, and cultural knowledge necessary to rule "the Moslems" effectively. "He who would deal with them successfully must be, firstly, honest and truthful and, secondly, familiar with and favourably inclined to their manners and customs if not their law and religion" (xxiii–xxiv). Burton's dual affiliation in this preface to both source and target text and culture indicates what David Damrosch sees as the doubly refractive possibility of texts in circulation (Damrosch 2003: 283). Burton, who would be buried in his homeland beneath the cement folds of a Bedouin tent, positions his translation to reflect the practices and values of the Arabs, and of Islam in particular, even as he promotes the value of this knowledge to the cultural and political mission of his own country.

The translations of Galland, Lane, and Burton determine the boundaries within which *Alf Layla wa Layla* has traveled over the past three hundred years – as narrative, as sourcebook, as orientalist polemic. Jorge Luis Borges' classic article on "The Translators of the *1001 Nights*" bears witness to the strong desire of each translator to rewrite this work in his own image in service to personal aesthetic, ethical, and political criteria. Recent translators of the work, notably Husain Haddawy, have countered this trend by asserting the *Nights*' place as a work of Arabic literature, and engaging in the kind of careful translational practice that acknowledges the value of the original text. Within the Arab world, however, the work has maintained

its standing as a sub-literary text, a work that has no position within the canon of Arabic literatures. Yet *Alf Layla* endures as a literary text both within and beyond its source culture, and recognizes no limits, even when crossing the literary, cultural, political, and ideological borders between East and West. An emblematic work of world literature, it has circulated far beyond its linguistic and cultural points of origin, adapting, as it travels, to various media, genres, and contexts.

## *Alf Layla* as intertext

One might productively develop a literary history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American literature using *Alf Layla wa Layla* as the generative source text. Innumerable Western writers – Beckford, Coleridge, Dickens, Mallarmé, Stevenson, Proust, Yeats, von Hofmannsthal, Twain, Borges, among many others – testify to the influence and importance of this work in the development of their own literary imagination. The short story form, and the *conte fantastique* in particular, were responsive to the intertexual possibilities of the *1001 Nights*. Two examples suffice: Théophile Gautier's "La Mille et deuxième nuit" (1842) and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade" (1845) represent a general fascination with Scheherazade's fate once she moved beyond the narrative time of 1001 nights into real time as the wife of Sultan Shahriyar.

Gautier portrays Scheherazade as returning to modern-day France in search of stories, giving him an opportunity to meditate ironically on the nature of the fantastic, the tension between the workaday realm of the ticking clock and the hashish-induced realm of infinite narrative time. In embedding the tale of Mahmoud Ben Ahmed as a narrative offering to Scheherazade, who has exhausted her supply of life-sustaining tales, Gautier's narrator self-consciously borrows various defining tropes from his source text with which he repeatedly questions the boundaries between the real and the fantastic. In its imitation of the frame narrative structure and its satiric foregrounding of multiple linguistic realms and the consequent necessity of translation, Gautier uses *Alf Layla* in service to a larger reflection on the power of narrative to transgress the limits of reality. That this 1002 night tale fails, that Scheherazade is apparently beheaded because the translated tale provides inadequate pleasure, suggests perhaps the limits of translation as well as the limits of *Alf Layla wa Layla* to supply a never-ending source of narrative. If translation is the means by which world literature circulates, Gautier throws into question the possibility of such circulation, even as he himself uses Galland's *Les mille et une nuits* as a generative narrative source.

Poe uses Scheherazade's post-narrative life to similar ironic purpose. But where Gautier's tale muses on the way we tell stories, Poe's tale uses parody to reflect on the matter of the stories we tell. "Having had occasion, lately, in the course of some Oriental investigations, to consult the 'Tellmenow Isitsöorisitnot,' begins Poe's story (Poe 1938: 104). Whereas Gautier uses the structure of narrative in the original source text as a paradigm for his own work, Poe subverts the principles on which *Alf Layla wa Layla* is organized, both thematically and structurally. "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade" throws into question the possibility of narrative

realism and, by comparison, the nature of the fantastic, by eliminating the embedded narrative and intensifying the descriptions of natural phenomena and technological innovation that, in the context of nineteenth-century America seemingly belong to the realm of the marvelous – the steamship, the petrified forests of Texas, hot-air balloons, an automaton chess player.

If Poe's Scheherazade, like Gautier's, also fails to please Sultan Shahriyar, it is less because her narrative gifts have failed and more because Scheherazade has been unable to translate successfully the context and history within which her stories have meaning. "How can we account for the fact that, for Scheherazade, fiction generates both life and death?" Jerome Denuccio asks in one of the few analyses of Poe's tale. "Part of the answer has to do with believability or verisimilitude" (Denuccio 1990: 366). The original stories of *Alf Layla wa Layla* depend on the reader's willingness to accept the terms of the narrative realm within which Scheherazade's tales unfold, whether it be Abbasid Baghdad, medieval Cairo, or an unspecified time and place where fantastic events can occur without demanding ironic framing. In parodying the kind of story that Scheherazade told to save her life, Poe forces the reader to question at what point a text loses its original identity as it crosses not only national but historical and literary boundaries as well.

## *Alf Layla* and the postmodern

It is the narrative technique of embedding, of telling tales within tales, that frequently captures the imagination of the inheritors of the *1001 Nights*. Often enough, the focus is on Scheherazade, as primary tale-teller. At stake in many of the more contemporary works in which *Alf Layla wa Layla* functions as intertext, however, is the status of the reader or listener as well. John Barth's novella *Dunyazadiad* (1972) foregrounds the role of Dunyazad, the ideal listener, in a postmodern retelling of the frame story. Moving between 1970s America and the work's original setting, Barth's narrator, who adopts the persona of the author himself, raises questions about narrative creation and reception and the possibility of moving between narrative realms as he engages in meta-fictional and sexual play. Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* and Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* offer perhaps the two best-known examples of the postmodern reincarnation of *Alf Layla wa Layla*. Like *Dunyazadiad*, both works foreground the exchange of stories between teller and listener, and both insist upon the ability of narrative to require the reader to reconceptualize his or her relationship to the real. The disruption of linear narrative in Calvino's novel opens up the possibility of an infinite narrative, an endless series of stories within stories in "the spirit of the *Arabian Nights*" (Calvino 1979: 258). Rushdie's work, written ostensibly as a children's book following the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, also self-consciously references various narrative strategies and topoi of the *Nights* as it manipulates the potential of story-telling to critique social and political conditions.

Recent Arab American authors have similarly engaged the self-reflexive potential of this narrative sourcebook. In Rabih Alameddine's novel *The Hakawati* (2008), Osama al-Kharrat, a young Lebanese man now living in America, returns to his

homeland to sit by the bedside of his dying father. In the course of his father's passage from life to death, stories from a variety of narrative traditions are told, acknowledging both the function of the *hakawati*, the story-teller, and the life-giving potential of *Alf Layla*. If narrative cannot, in this case, stave off death, it can and does bring about a happy ending in which familial accord is restored. Alia Yunis, in *The Night Counter* (2010), uses *Alf Layla*, and the figure of Scheherazade in particular, to a similar end but through different plot means. Eager to embrace death, Fatima Abdullah, the aging matriarch of a family that has emigrated from Lebanon to America, tells an ever-young Scheherazade stories for 1001 nights, in the hope that Scheherazade in return will tell her when her own death will occur. This time, however, the power of *Alf Layla* to stop time, to delay the requirement of an ending, ironically succeeds. At the end of her nights of story-telling, Fatima, whose story-telling has been propelled by her own death wish, chooses life over her ultimate ending.

The Urdu writer Intizar Husain similarly throws into question the necessary but sometimes frictional relationship between narrator and listener in her short story, "The Death of Shahrazad" (2002). Located in the time immediately following the end of the 1001 nights, Husain's story offers a Scheherazade who reflects darkly on the trauma she has experienced in the course of all those nights. "How could she forget those thousand and one nights when she had told her stories under the cloud of death? … One night she made Dunyazad sit beside her and said, 'Dear sister, now when I think about it, my mind clouds over. I spent a thousand and one nights telling stories! Tell me, how did it happen?'" (Husain 2003: 524). Dunyazad is ultimately unable to answer Scheherazade, who, as the story progresses, loses all narrative memory. In forgetting all the stories she has told, however, she transmits her narrative gift to her sister and assumes the role of listener herself. "Shahrazad heard Dunyazad's story as though it was her sister's story, and not her own. She was now among the listeners" (527). Dunyazad inherits the gift of narrative, even as that inheritance impoverishes Scheherazade and foretells her death as story-teller. Despite the exhaustion of the original narrative source, the potential to sustain narrative, to transfer it from one teller to another, one context to another, persists.

## *Alf Layla* and the postcolonial

In relocating Scheherazade to her narrative place of origin, Husain's story gestures towards the postcolonial repossession of *Alf Layla wa Layla*. Scheherazade's fate, as well as the fate of the *1001 Nights*, has provided ample material for writers in the Arab world, and the Maghreb in particular, to ponder their postcolonial condition. For these writers, *Alf Layla wa Layla* opens up the possibility of a linguistic and cultural space for reflection on the power of Orientalist discourse, and on the changing relationship between the colonial and postcolonial. Within this context, the figure of Scheherazade has particular value as a site in which the construction of gender within Islamic society is reconsidered and ultimately reconceptualized.

Assia Djebar's *Ombre sultane* (*A Sister to Scheherazade*, 1987), the second volume of her *Quatuor algérien*, uses the relationship between Scheherazade and Dunyazad to

configure alternative concepts of gender and authority. In adopting Scheherazade's role as story-teller, Djebar's heroine Isma affirms the power of narrative to restructure cultural norms and behaviors. For Leila Sebbar, another Francophone writer, however, the figure of Scheherazade functions as an oppressive force that constrains identity. In *Sherazade* (1982), the first volume of a trilogy that details the life of the eponymous young *beur* woman of the title, Sebbar examines the tensions of bicultural identity. Sherazade is a young woman who resists conforming to the norms of a static single identity. She functions both inside and outside of the parameters of the Orientalist feminine exotic, and in so doing expertly manipulates the multiple manifestations of "the representation business" that threaten to confine her (Woodhull 1993: 19). Her name, in its near echo of the original story-teller's name, bears witness to her simultaneous participation in and resistance to the cultural and narrative inheritance bequeathed to her by Scheherazade. Sebbar's Sherazade writes; she sings; and most importantly, she reads; but she refuses to assume the role of story-teller, to produce stories that would locate her within the literary and cultural heritage determined by her name.

In 1979, three years prior to the appearance of Sebbar's novel, Naguib Mahfouz published *Layali Alf Layla*, translated by Denys Johnson-Davies in 1995 as *Arabian Nights and Days*, another novel in which Scheherazade resists the role of story-teller. In recombining various story elements and characters from *Alf Layla* into a sustained narrative, Mahfouz's novel reframes the questions of power and justice that subtly underpin the original frame story, and in so doing, re-defines the central characters and narrative structure of the original work. The organizing narrative principle of the frame tale is absent from *Arabian Nights and Days*, as is the narrative technique of embedding and the resulting story cycles. Curiously taciturn and recalcitrant, Scheherazade is absent for much of the narrative. Other original characters from the *Nights* also act against type. Despite extensive travel, Sindbad has no stories to tell. Ma'aruf the Cobbler acquires popular democratic power. Dunyazad marries Nur al-Din, hero of one of her sister's stories, instead of Shahriyar's brother Shah Zaman. The narrative self-consciousness and life-sustaining powers of story-telling evident in the original work give way in this modern novel to probing the transformative potential of real political action and revolution. Indeed, as Wen-Chin Ouyang remarks in her article on transformations of the *1001 Nights*, *Layali Alf Layla* is frequently read as "an allegory of political reality in the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular" (Ouyang 2003: 408).

The political promise of *Alf Layla wa Layla* is also powerfully embodied in the American playwright Mary Zimmerman's work, *The Arabian Nights*. Written in 1992 as a response to the first Gulf War, and first performed by the Lookingglass Theatre Company in Chicago, Zimmerman's play necessarily alters the way in which the story is told, as well as the kind of story that can be told. In many ways, however, the play is more faithful to the original work than many translations. Zimmerman takes advantage of the physical requirements of theater to return the play to its original culture of performance. In detailed notes on staging and in her stage directions, Zimmerman determines the nature of the space within which the play will be performed. Although the set is minimalist, Oriental carpets define different arenas for story-telling, and live Arabic music is performed on stage. Actors take on the voices

of multiple characters, in much the same way that Scheherazade ventriloquizes the voices of the multiple characters she calls into being as she tells her stories. Improvisation is essential to the actors' performance. In homage, perhaps, to the original improvisational nature of oral narrative, Zimmerman creates a dramatic space in her play in which actors construct anew a different story each night. It is the play's ending, however, that underscores most resonantly its participation in the world and the world literary tradition within which *Alf Layla* has circulated. As the actors tell the end of Scheherazade's story, as everyone rejoices as Scheherazade marries Shahriyar and Dunyazad marries Shahzaman, actors and audience alike are abruptly transported to contemporary Iraq as sirens blare. The actors' voices are drowned out by the intrusion of the disruptive and violent sounds of war, and language fades away. Even as the play acknowledges its place within a global literary history, it suggests the possibility that this history might be threatened by very real and powerful forces beyond its control.

It is in the intersection of these various texts and languages and cultures that *Alf Layla wa Layla* takes place as a work of world literature and assumes its position as a foundational narrative text. The textual and cultural interactions produced by the passage of *Alf Layla* from language to language, genre to genre, medium to medium, suggest the very real potential of world literature to become a site where difference and conflict are engaged and productive communication is modeled. *Alf Layla* begins as a story of disruption and violence and ends as a story of conjunction and reconciliation. Scheherazade ultimately succeeds in restoring her homeland to a peaceful state by telling Shahriyar stories that, by virtue of the pleasure and wisdom they impart, restore his sanity, return him as the ruler of a rightly-governed and just society, and re-establish his relationships with others.

In a presentation on her production of the *Arabian Nights*, Mary Zimmerman remarks, "It's through storytelling that we cultivate empathy" (Zimmerman 2009). In so doing, story-telling opens up the possibility of what we might call an ethics of empathy, a strategy of reading and writing that promotes understanding, dialogue, and interconnection among people, among cultures, and ultimately across nations. "The idea is not that nations shall think alike but that they shall learn how to understand each other," writes Goethe, " … and, if they do not care to love one another, at least they will learn to tolerate each other" (Goethe 1921: 92). What a work like *Alf Layla wa Layla* can do, and indeed what the space claimed by world literature as a concept can do, is show us how this understanding can be achieved, how these connections can be made, and how, perhaps, something even greater than tolerance can be realized, often in the most unexpected ways and places.

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# 50
# WORLD LITERATURE AND MUSLIM SOUTHEAST ASIA

*Ronit Ricci*

Southeast Asia, as categorized in post-World War II divisions of the globe, includes a broad collection of nations, some of which are among the world's most internally diverse: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, Burma, Cambodia, the Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, and East Timor. Considering this vast and variegated region in terms of nation-states (most of which were created as recently as fifty or sixty years ago, if not less), as well as in terms of our present, rigid categorization of world "areas," obscures the fluid realities of earlier centuries. In particular, it tends to hide from view the circuits and networks by which people across these lands were connected with each other, and their paths of contact and exchange with sites and communities in China, India, Arabia, the Pacific and beyond. Such tendencies meant that not only did vibrant and diverse local literary cultures emerge in Southeast Asia, but a whole range of literary works, genres and poetics that came from other parts of the world have been accommodated, adapted, and transformed in the region.

For example, if we look back to the fifth to ninth centuries AD, Sanskrit epigraphs appear not only across the Indian subcontinent but also in Java, Cambodia, Laos, and the Malay peninsula (Pollock 2006: 125–32). These Southeast Asian locales were integrated into what Pollock has termed "the Sanskrit cosmopolis" (Pollock 2006). *Authors' and audiences' participation in a Sanskritic literary world that stretched* from Kashmir to Bali is attested in Sanskrit inscriptions at Angkor Wat (from the fifth to thirteenth centuries), and in Javanese poetry (written between the ninth and fourteenth centuries) that was highly Sanskritized in its vocabulary, verse forms, and content. In Cambodia's next-door neighbor Vietnam, however, different developments unfolded: bordering on China and dominated by it for a millennium, the vocabulary, grammatical structures, forms of writing (including political and poetic discourses), and, above all, orthography were strongly influenced by Chinese models.

Almost a millennium later, during the late colonial period, present-day Malaysia, Brunei, Burma, Singapore (and of course India, now considered part of South Asia) were all part of British Asia, Indonesia was a Dutch colony, Vietnam a French one and Timor Portuguese. These different colonial powers imposed, among other

policies, different language and educational policies on the peoples they ruled, resulting in lasting effects on the choice and use of national languages in these post-colonial states and on their scenes of literary production, including what forms of world literature they chose to draw on, circulate, or ignore.

For the purposes of this chapter I define world literature, following Damrosch (2003: 6), as works circulating beyond their linguistic and cultural point of origin. My own primary interest is in thinking not just about how such literature circulates far from its birthplace but also about how it then crosses paths with local, earlier literary traditions, transforming them while, concurrently, being transformed in the process. That is, I am less interested in tracing the trajectory of a work moving from one particular place to another, and more in the encounters and interactions that such mobility entails. In the following pages I discuss such developments as they have taken shape in Muslim Southeast Asia.

The designation Muslim Southeast Asia as employed here refers to Muslim communities across the region, where they are concentrated first and foremost in present-day Indonesia and Malaysia. However, there are Muslim populations in all other countries in the region, most notably in Thailand and the Philippines (with both states experiencing violent tensions related to their rule over Muslim minorities), Brunei, and Singapore. Despite speaking different languages and living across a large geographical and cultural expanse, Muslims in Southeast Asia have long been connected with one another, and with Islam's centers elsewhere, through a variety of networks: they often lived in coastal towns from whence they traded across the Indian Ocean; some travelled to Arabia to fulfil the important duty of the *hajj* – the pilgrimage to Mecca – meeting and interacting there with their co-religionists from other parts of Asia and beyond; others travelled for the purpose of livelihood or religious learning. Writing of his experiences in the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta (who visited Sumatra in 1345) described the hospitality and local support he could count on wherever he went throughout a plural, vast, and networked Muslim world. Whereas a traveller of similar scope and daring such as Marco Polo experienced an ongoing sense of being a "stranger in a strange land," Ibn Battuta felt an "at-homeness" everywhere, even while travelling great distances from his homeland of Tangier, despite being, on many objective counts, a foreigner (Dunn 1986).

The study of networks is thus essential to understanding Islam and Southeast Asia. Also pivotal to understanding both is thinking in terms of the "world": considering Islam as a global religion, and Southeast Asia as a crossroads leading to faraway horizons. In this essay I focus on a particular kind of network – which I call "literary network" – and how it served to connect Muslims across the region and further afield through works of a particular world literature, fostering a sense of shared community, a shared idiom, and a common history. Within such networks it was Arabic (and sometimes Persian) literature that provided the conduit – through its themes, genres, and language – for a religious and cultural transformation of great magnitude: Islamization.

The Islamic literary networks were comprised of many shared works, including histories, genealogies, poems, stories, and treatises on a broad range of subjects; they also included the readers, listeners, authors, translators, and scribes who created the texts, translated and transmitted them, and engaged with them in various ways, thus

facilitating the networks, enhancing their reach and significance. Beyond particular texts and individuals, thinking about literary networks also means exploring the multilayered histories of contacts, selection, interpretation and serendipity that shaped the networks as we have come to know them. (For further development of these relations, see Ricci 2010, on which the present essay is partially based).

The literary works I consider were told and retold in local languages which were profoundly influenced and shaped by the influx of Arabic, a language whose significance for Muslim individuals and societies cannot be overstated, on account of its association with divine revelation and the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims in Southeast Asia proved no exception in their reverence towards, and various uses of, Arabic and Arabicized forms of language. In exploring the literary networks, Arabic is defined broadly as the bearer of new stories, ideas, beliefs, scripts, and linguistic and literary forms which, along with oral sources, poetics, and genres, were to a large extent shared by Muslims across a linguistically and culturally diverse Southeast Asia. These contributed to the rise of a common repository of images, memories, and meaning that in turn fostered a consciousness of belonging to a trans-local community.

## Islamization in the Indonesian-Malay region

The spread of Islam in the Indonesian-Malay region was a complex process which has been much debated by scholars, both local and foreign. These have suggested various theories regarding Islam's arrival and acceptance by indigenous populations, based for the most part on archeological findings, travelers' accounts, and local chronicles. Historical evidence, taken together, points to a slow and gradual process of Islam's spread: by the end of the thirteenth century Islam was established in northern Sumatra; in the fourteenth century in northeast Malaya, Brunei, parts of east Java and the southern Philippines; and in the fifteenth century in Malacca and other areas of the Malay Peninsula; in the sixteenth century the coastal areas of Central and East Java were mostly Islamic, while Java's western region and much of the interior was not (Ricklefs 2001: 4–13). The influence of Sufis has been viewed as central to the spread of Islam in the Archipelago. With their focus on personal devotion, healing, and the charismatic power of teachers and saints, Sufis have provided a bridge between the beliefs of non-Muslims and Muslim worship, as they have in many other regions. Tomb shrines, often associated with Sufi masters, gave rise to devotional cults which served as a critical force in the expansion of Islam.

Contacts of many kinds provided the building blocks for the emergence of the Islamic literary networks and their expansion across Southeast as well as South Asia. The coasts of South India and Indonesia were part of the Indian Ocean's commercial network where goods and shared texts and values crossed the seas, carried by Muslim merchants, pilgrims, soldiers, and scholars, and where coastal towns, which functioned as important trade centers and ports, developed into major centers of Islamic learning and culture. For example, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the sultanate of Banten on Java's northern coast had extensive trade contacts with

the Chulias, Muslim traders from the Coromandel coast, many of whom settled in the town (Guillot 1999). Iron, steel, diamonds, and fabrics were exported to Aceh via Masulipatnam from the Persianized kingdom of Golconda in the seventeenth century, in exchange for benzoin, camphor, and pepper (Lombard 1999: 186). Besides trade, Muslims in the region were linked by a variety of associations, including shared pilgrimage sites, a school of Islamic law common to the majority of Southeast Asian Muslims (the Shafi'i *madh'hab*), ties of marriage, and deployment to colonial armies (Bayly 1989: 145). These connections exemplify how literature turns worldly, and travels, in conjunction with a variety of relationships and encounters.

Having briefly considered the evidence for sustained contacts among Muslim communities in the region and the flows of people, ideas, and practices these enabled, I turn now to a more detailed discussion of the roles played by literary texts that, to a large degree, were shared by Muslims from diverse communities in the region. Such shared works enhanced a sense of common ground and familiarity with a particular vocabulary, idiom, and belief system; they also, concurrently, inspired local creativity and provided a means to address local concerns and agendas. For scholars in the present such literature provides a site for examining the ways in which particular societies articulated how and why Islam was initially accepted, why professing Islam remains important, and how these processes were remembered and understood. It also allows us to explore the transmission of one of the world's great literary traditions into Southeast Asia and the intertwining and overlaps of a world literature with a world religion.

Reading the literature means, in part, being attentive to how language is employed within it and considering what particular ways of usage may suggest. The spread of Islam in the regions discussed here, however distant from the Middle East culturally and geographically, cannot be fully grasped without seriously considering the role of Arabic and the profound changes that its incorporation – at many levels – into local vernaculars has brought about. "Arabic" must be considered not in a narrow sense but broadly, including ideas about its sanctity, its resulting untranslatability, and the range of ideas and stories which it carried along as its legacy.

In the next sections I present an example of a textual corpus that has certainly travelled far beyond its place of origin: the Islamic *Book of One Thousand Questions*. I outline its translation history in order to highlight its worldliness – it has been read from Spain to Java, in languages ranging from Latin to Tamil – but I focus on its translation and circulation among Southeast Asian Muslims, and more specifically among speakers of Javanese and Malay. The latter is the most widely spoken language in Southeast Asia, with an estimated 250 million speakers (this calculation takes into account speakers of the national languages of Malaysia and Indonesia), placing it in the category of major world languages.

## The *Book of One Thousand Questions*: an introduction

The *One Thousand Questions*' narrative frame is rather straightforward: a Jewish leader in seventh-century Arabia by the name of 'Abdullah bin Salām meets with the Prophet Muhammad. He informs the Prophet that he wishes to ask him some

questions and, should he be convinced by the replies, he and his people will embrace Islam. The questions – spanning multiple topics, from the afterlife to mysticism – are then posed and answered, and the Jews, realizing Muhammad is, indeed, the "Seal of the Prophets", convert. Most likely reflecting the intellectual and doctrinal struggle between Jews and Muslims in the early days of Islam's development, the *One Thousand Questions* – with conversion at its heart – later circulated far and wide.

The way the story was told and retold in different languages and cultural contexts provides a glimpse of the histories and shifting agendas of Muslim communities that emerged far from the birthplace of this story and of their religion. The questions – and the replies – present us with the issues deemed central at particular moments, by particular authors, in particular places, pointing above all – through the conversion narrative – to why one should choose to become and remain a Muslim. The *One Thousand Questions*' variations – across languages and periods – are numerous and complex. Often the same question, presented by Ibnu Salam (the localized version of bin Salām's name) to the Prophet in different versions, received different replies – very much context bound – in different languages. For example, 'Abdullah's question about who is destined for hell in the afterlife provided different authors with the opportunity to present depictions of sinners and their punishments in hell. Such depictions, in turn, helped to define the boundaries of permitted and forbidden behaviors in living, worldly Muslim societies.

## The *Book of One Thousand Questions* – a brief translation history

The tenth-century Arabic work first recounting the dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad and the Jew did not emerge out of the blue. Several centuries of prior texts, circulating in the form of *hadith* traditions (reports on the words and deeds of the Prophet) and Qur'anic commentaries, lay at its foundations. The tradition of encounters between Muhammad and the Jews goes back to Qur'anic passages, and mention of a Jewish convert to Islam has been taken to refer to Ibnu Salam, the protagonist of the *One Thousand Questions* (Qur'an 46:9). The Qur'anic citations were later elaborated by some of the earliest writers of Islamic history, including Ibn Hisham, Muslim, and al-Tabari (Hirschfeld 1897). And so, although the Arabic text of the *One Thousand Questions* dates from the tenth century, tradition locates the germ of the story in the very early and formative period of Islam, and in the context of its most sacred scripture.

Interestingly, the first translation of the Arabic text was not into another Muslim language but into Latin, as part of Peter the Venerable's twelfth-century translation project, created to encourage acquaintance with and study of Muslim religious doctrine and literature in Christian Europe, engaged at the time in the Crusades. The project, known today as the "Toledo Collection," included five texts, among them the Qur'an and the *Book of One Thousand Questions*, translated as *Doctrina Mahumet* by Herman of Dalmatia in 1143 (Kritzeck 1964). The Latin version of the text was then translated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries into several European languages, including Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, German and French (Pijper 1924: 8–9; Bobzin 1995: 334–35).

Significantly, in several cases, the *Doctrina Mahumet* was published bound in a single volume with the Qur'an, as had been done originally in Peter the Venerable's project. The Dutch and German editions were printed in the same manner. This suggests that the text was viewed and used in Christian Europe as a supplement to, or commentary on, the Qur'an, according it great authority. And indeed Bobzin (1995: 334) views the text as most influential in shaping European conceptions of Islam. Also significant, in a similar vein, is the way in which sections of the Latin *One Thousand Questions* were added as a supplement to a 1598 Dutch travel account of the Moluccas (the "Spice Islands"). Depicted in the travelogue were a local funeral, circumcision, and other rituals. The editors used sections of the Latin translation to attempt a better understanding of the culture described (Steenbrink 1993: 31–33). This example also shows the nonlinear, roundabout ways in which the story travelled and was used and understood. Over a century before Valentijn reported a familiarity with the Malay *One Thousand Questions* on Ambon, its Latin version was incorporated into a Dutch book on that same region.

Throughout the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries the text travelled east and was further translated into additional languages, to be rewritten and retold across great geographic and cultural distances. Retaining its basic narrative structure and the question-and-answer format, it differed in many details and emphases in its local tellings, in accordance with specific concerns and agendas. Its title, length, number of questions, and some thematic elements were altered as it circulated across regions. The *One Thousand Questions* was translated into Persian, Turkish, Urdu, and Tamil. In the Indonesian Archipelago, besides the versions in Javanese and Malay, the text appeared also in Sundanese and Bugis. In 1847 an Arabic version of the *One Thousand Questions* was translated into English by a Christian missionary working in North Africa, who chose to frame it for his readers with the provocative, if inaccurate, title "The Errors of Mohammedanism Exposed" (Davis 1847).

Turning to Southeast Asia, we find that the *One Thousand Questions* in Javanese (titled *Serat Samud*) survives in at least two dozen manuscripts and a print edition from 1913. The earliest extant version dates from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, while most manuscripts available today were copied in the nineteenth century. As is typical of Javanese works, it is not uncommon that a date and place of inscription, source language or author remain unmentioned, making it difficult to follow the text's history with certainty. Although many of the questions appearing in other languages appear also in Javanese, its emphasis is on mystical teachings and the relationship between the human and the divine.

Malay poses no less complex a picture. When Valentijn visited the Moluccas in the early eighteenth century, he found there a copy of the Malay text (Reid 1993: 170). Pijper (1924: 72–78) lists fifteen manuscripts of the work, kept in the libraries of Leiden, Jakarta and London, with written and published versions appearing from Cairo to Singapore. Several versions claim explicitly to be based on a Persian source, and almost all attribute their origin to the Prophet's uncle 'Abbās. The story was composed in different genres, including *syair* (poetry composed of four-line stanzas), *kitab* (religious treatises), and *hikayat* (prose narratives). Possible shared sites of production for Malay and Javanese versions – like Palembang or Banten – hint at

potentially fruitful interactions between authors and translators working in the two languages.

## Old history, new places

To further bring out the significance of the dissemination of such Arabic-derived literature in Southeast Asia, I turn to a brief example from among the many questions discussed in the *Book of One Thousand Questions*. The broad theme I address has to do with how societies in transition, undergoing a profound change such as Islamization, gradually amassed for themselves the textual sources allowing an engagement with, and commitment to, a history only recently adopted; and how translators and authors assembled for their audiences pieces of this long history, initially foreign, in which these audiences would eventually come to be included, and which they could begin to call their own.

A series of questions that I will refer to as the "number questions" provides an example. 'Abdullah bin Salām asks the Prophet what is one, not two … what is two, not three … going from one to thirty; he then continues in the same vein, proceeding by tens and asking what is thirty, not forty … what is forty, not fifty … all the way to one hundred. These number questions, in various forms, appear in early Arabic versions of *One Thousand Questions*, in the twelfth-century Latin translation, and in other languages, including Malay (on which the example below is based, see Djamaris 1994).

The replies to the "number questions" in Malay – thirty-seven in all – offer a brief mapping of several domains, which in turn gain their own references from additional textual sources. Many themes are addressed, with the histories of the prophets and a Muslim understanding of time occupying the prominent positions within this condensed presentation of Islam.

There are seventeen questions – almost half of the total number – that address the lives and deeds of the prophets: for example, the number nine stands for the number of times God revealed himself to Moses; eleven are Joseph's brothers; Moses was born on the twenty-second of the month of Ramadan, while on its twenty-seventh day Jonah was swallowed by the fish. The brief presentation of these prophets offers the kernel of their life story as popularly known and as elaborated in the much longer, detailed, and popular renditions of the prophets' biographies.

Addressing Muslim notions of time occurs through, for example, the replies on the number five (daily prayers), six (days of creation), seven (days of the week), twelve (months of the year), and, most notably, the various days of the month of Ramadan on which auspicious events occurred: the fifteenth (Muhammad received the Qur'an), the twentieth (David received Psalms), the twenty-first (Solomon received his ring), the twenty-second (Moses's birth), the twenty-third (Jesus received the Gospel), the twenty-fifth (Moses crossed the Red Sea), the twenty-sixth (the Torah was revealed to Moses), and the thirtieth (God spoke to Moses).

Found here is an incorporation of various dimensions of time, from the divisions of a single day to the days of the week and the annual cycle of months, to a larger sacred history condensed into the holy month of Ramadan, during which so many

events significant to Muslim history are said to have occurred. The first theme – that of the prophets' lives – is linked to notions of time through the days of Ramadan. Audiences attentive to this list of questions and answers received an abbreviated introduction to their prophets, the structures of time that guide Muslim lives, and to the way the two are intertwined in the ritual and moral observances of the fasting month.

Other matters are addressed only briefly in this question series, yet together the "number questions" and their replies strengthen the impression that for the reader/listener an entire picture emerged, its details ranging from the four holy scriptures to the punishment of one hundred blows inflicted on those who commit adultery.

In their intertextual drawing on Qur'anic verses, the canonical tradition, and Islamic law, the "number questions" present a web of meanings and associations in which history and memory play a major role. The connection made between the days of Ramadan and so many central events and figures collapses the boundaries between past and present and draws those listening to the text's recitation closer to a past of mythical proportions with which they can now more strongly identify. The "number questions" are a "mini-guide" of sorts; even more pertinently, we may see in them a "mini-*Book of One Thousand Questions*," in which the important facets covered in the text as a whole are put forth in abbreviated form, appropriate for both new converts and practicing Muslims.

The *Book of One Thousand Questions* thus played a role in the inclusion of its audiences within a geographically and culturally diverse Muslim world by introducing and disseminating stories, dialogues, questions, historical and mythic characters, Arabic/Islamic terminology and vocabulary, Qur'anic quotes, and a gallery of shared images. It was especially well suited to this role by virtue of the astonishing scope of materials and issues it raised and addressed; through the many intertextual links of these materials to other scriptures, texts, translations, and oral traditions; by its appeal both to converts and long-time Muslims; the authority of the Prophet lying at its center; and by its dissemination across many cultures and languages. If world literature can be understood not primarily as a set of texts but as a "mode of circulation and reading" (Damrosch 2003: 5), the *Book of One Thousand Questions* and other works like it – deriving ultimately from Arabic, localized in diverse settings, and given purpose and meaning within them – can be viewed as exemplary.

## Concluding thoughts

Thinking about the ways Arabic, and often Persian, Islamic literature circulated in Southeast Asia – in its original form, in translation, or through various modes of creative adaptation – allows us to see how faraway places like Java or the Malay peninsula were incorporated into a vast Muslim world; it points us to the interconnectivity of Muslim societies across place, time, and culture; and it underscores the power of literature to create, enable, and sustain far-reaching transformations. This is especially evident when we consider the fact that the country with the world's largest Muslim population today is Indonesia.

But such processes of dissemination of stories and ideas are never uni-directional. Through such developments, for example, Arabic ceased to be a purely Middle Eastern language and was itself altered as it interacted with dissimilar tongues, was written in different scripts, and was employed in a range of localized contexts. Similar in some ways to Sanskrit during an earlier period, it was a driving force within a cosmopolitan sphere that encompassed large parts of South and Southeast Asia (Ricci 2011).

The adoption and adaption of an Arabic world literature into Malay, Javanese, Bugis, Achehnese, and other Southeast Asian languages entailed change, innovation, and ingenuity. When we consider this historical example, and its connection to the spread of religion, language, poetic sensibilities, historical paradigms, and genres, it becomes clear that reading world literature is not just about learning to know the "other" – as may sometimes be the case in World Literature classrooms today – but can instead entail an experience of an altogether different magnitude.

Southeast Asian literary cultures – the Islamic ones I have discussed here, and others – remain marginal in most World Literature courses despite their richness, the lessons they have to offer on particular and global histories, translation practices, religious thought, aesthetics and poetics less widely studied, performative traditions, and more. The reasons for this phenomenon are beyond the scope of this essay but certainly deserve critical consideration and reflection.

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